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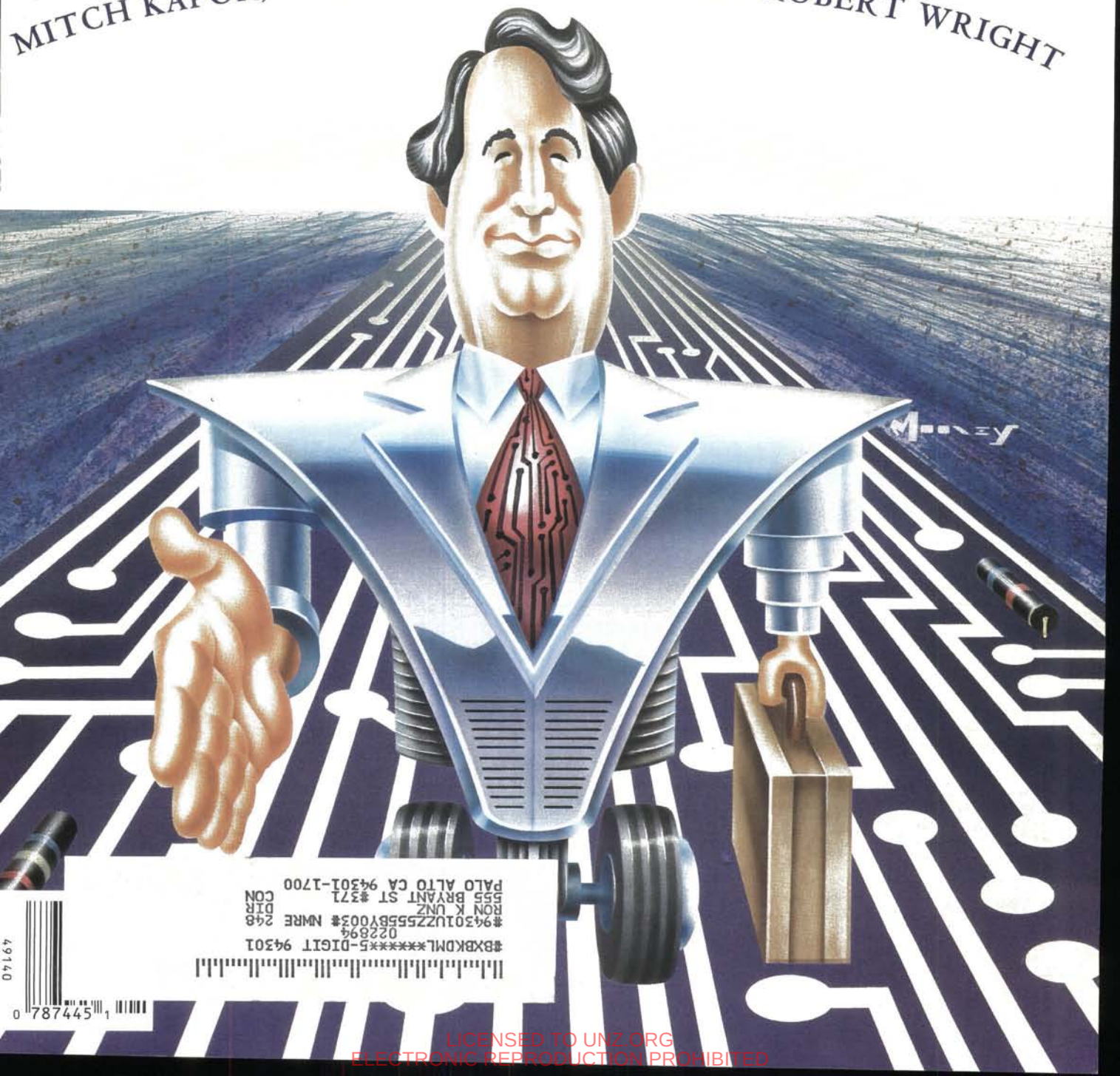

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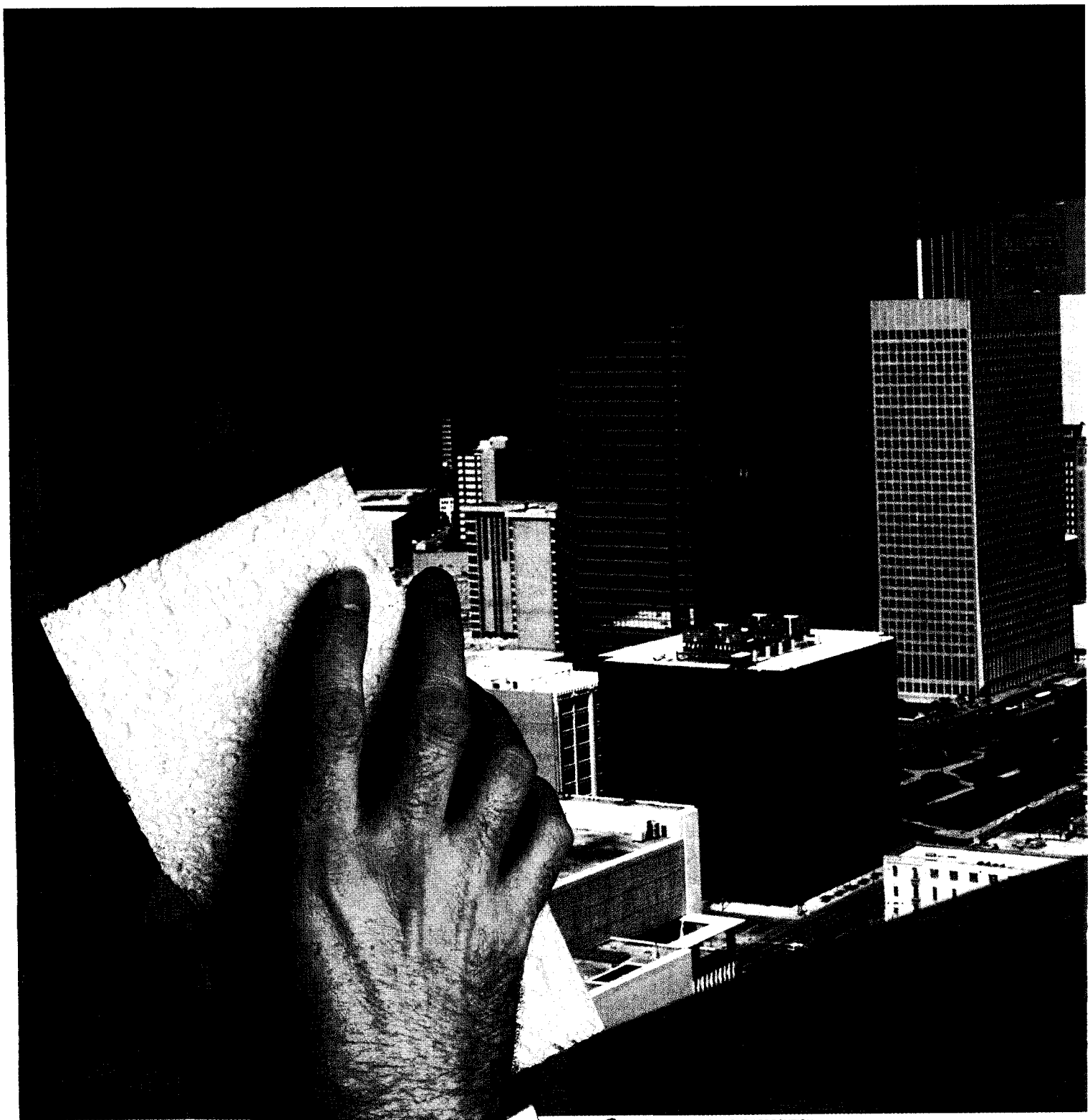

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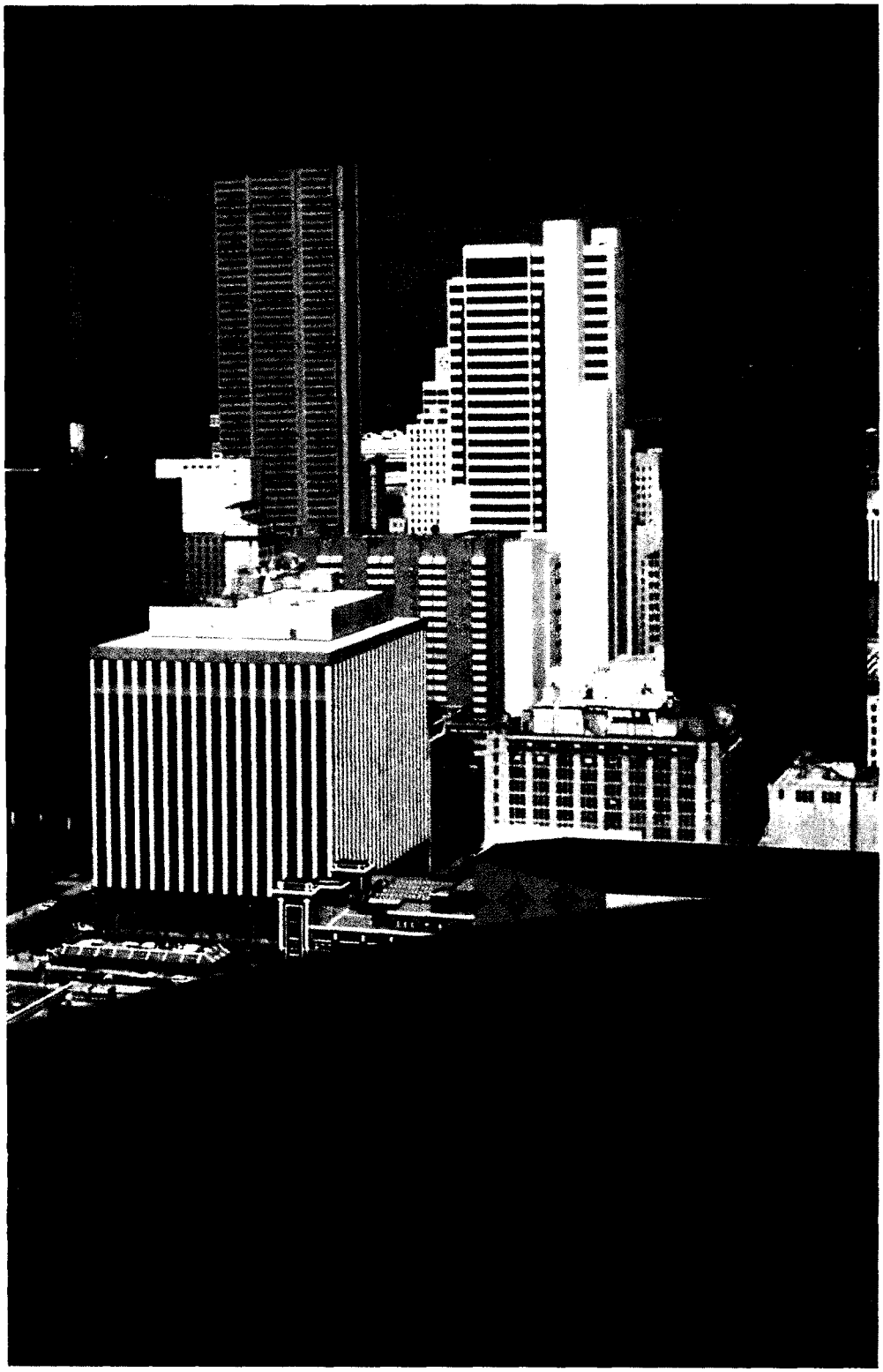

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FROM WASHINGTON

Local hero

"The worse I do, the more popular I get."
—private remark by President Kennedy after the Bay of Pigs disaster

Am I alone in thinking there's something perverse, even a bit obscene, about the current lionization of Attorney General Janet Reno? Reno, we're told, is "a prized asset" (*The New York Times*), "the very best appointee of the Clinton administration, bar none" (Morton Kondracke on "The McLaughlin Group"). At a recent black-tie press banquet, she was "accorded superstar status," reports *The Washington Post.* Congresspersons rush to praise her ("a breath of fresh air ... absolutely outstanding"). Representative Patricia Schroeder gushes: "You've raised the responsibility and accountability of public service to an incredibly high level in a way we've never seen before."

What exactly has Reno done to merit this glory? She made a disastrous decision that resulted in the loss of more than seventy lives. Then she accepted "responsibility." In a bizarre bit of political alchemy, this somehow protected her from suffering any of the consequences that normally attend disastrously handled responsibilities. Far from restoring accountability, Reno seems to have hit on the formula for avoiding it. Make a dreadful mistake? Go immediately on "Nightline." Say the buck stops with you. Recount in moving human terms the agony of your decision. And watch your polls rise. Truman + "Donahue" = Absolution.

Reno is an outsider who serves Washington's politic need to revolt against Washington politics. But what really put the locals over the top was Reno's dramatic, televised response to John Conyers of the House Judiciary Committee: "Most of all, congressman, I will not engage in recrimination." Here Reno did more than accept responsibility for *her* role; she was shielding her agency from criticism for *its* role. It was this refusal to criticize the FBI, not Reno's willingness to accept criticism herself, that led some FBI agents to call her a "stand-up guy." (Reno did call for a post-Waco "examination," but only one that would "focus on the future"—analyzing the need for more "training" and "staffing" rather than fixing blame.)

Here is a virtue Washingtonians can appreciate. Reno wasn't taking a refreshing outsider's stance; she was taking the traditional, self-protective stance of the permanent government. In fact, virtually every major bureaucratic bungle of the last forty years has been accompanied both by claims of "responsibility" and righteous calls for avoiding any "recrimination" that might actually cost some people their jobs. When stories began to leak about who had planned the Bay of Pigs invasion, President Kennedy not only accepted "the entire responsibility," but declared that "we should have no sort of passing of the buck or backbiting, however justified." Ronald Reagan's acceptance of "responsibility" for the 1983 Beirut disaster had the effect of shielding the responsible military commanders. Most memorably, as the Watergate scandal was breaking in 1973, Henry Kissinger (then Nixon's national security adviser) issued a heartfelt plea against an "orgy of recrimination."

But there's a lot to be said for recrimination, even orgies of it. Speaking for myself, I know that when I'm part of an organization that screws something up, I tend to want to know who screwed it up and why. Perhaps this makes me an ineffective, Queeg-like executive. Yet recrimination serves two obvious purposes.

First, deterrence. It's well and good to "focus on the future," as Reno puts it. But the best way to ensure the smart performance of FBI and ATF agents is to penalize those who perform stupidly. A prosecutor such as Reno, of all people, understands the prophylactic virtues of punishment.

Since the Waco raid, for example, there have been broad hints in the press that bureaucratic impulses—frustration, pride and worse—may have motivated the FBI to push its tear gas plan. "After fifty days, we looked like fools," a "high-ranking FBI official" told *The New York Observer.* "Were we going to sit there and wait for this guy to finish his treatise on the Seven Seals?" another FBI official complained to *The Washington Post.* Still others suggested that embattled FBI director William Sessions felt he had to take a gamble to save his reputation.

Does Reno feel that perhaps her subordinates misled her—exaggerating the dangers of a continued standoff and minimizing the risks of the gas assault? If so, how will she discourage them from doing it again? It doesn't matter, in this respect, if there is ever another Waco-like cult situation. What matters is that FBI officials know that misjudgment and misrepresentation in *any* situation will have consequences.

A second function of recrimination is investigative. George Washington may not have been punished when he took "full responsibility" for chopping down that cherry tree. But at least he had revealed who chopped it down. Who, exactly, gave the go-ahead for the initial raid on David Koresh's compound? It's hardly enough to simply pick a high-ranking official and sack him (ATF director Stephen Higgins seems the leading candidate). Most of the fumbles and deceptions probably occurred in the middle levels of the bureaucracy, where officials even now are surely closing ranks to thwart any investigators. In these situations, a perfunctory recrimination may not suffice; you need an orgy. Why do we know the truth about Watergate? Because Kissinger's plea went unheeded. Mid-level Nixon aides began desperately seeking to pin the blame on each other, leaking to both the press and prosecutors.

Yes, a readiness to recriminate may have its drawbacks. Recriminations can be unfair (the "who-lost-China" debate remains the pre-eminent example). Anticipation of future finger-pointing can also produce an unwillingness to take risks. But when lives are at stake, risk-aversion may not be a bad thing.

There is also an etiquette to recrimination. Nobody wants a leader who angrily demands an inquisition in the moments immediately after a fatal disaster. (Imagine Reagan ending his *Challenger* speech by declaring, "I'm going to get to the bottom of this, dammit.") Calm and consolation come first. But that doesn't mean we want leaders who use those emotional moments as the occasion to forestall an accurate placing of blame.

Indeed, Washingtonians tend to weigh the virtues and drawbacks of recrimination quite differently when the recriminatees don't work for the federal bureaucracy. If a train crashes in Florida, there is no talk of sparing the engineers and switchmen. Would Washington reporters have applauded a Reno-like call to avoid "recrimination" in the wake of, say, the Three Mile Island nuclear accident?

There's no reason to doubt Reno when she says she made a judgment call "the best way I know how." But even her admirers tend to concede that she didn't make it well. In record time (for an "outsider") she seems to have been captured by her agency—and when disaster struck, she instinctively protected those who had captured her. Only in Washington would that make her a hero.

MICKEY KAUS

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CORRESPONDENCE

Clincest fest

To the editors:

In his April 26 article titled "Clincest," Jacob Weisberg accuses me, in effect, of being a corrupt journalist. Let's check out his assertions:

Weisberg says I "told the president-elect that if he was looking for a female judge for attorney general, he should pick someone like [my wife, Federal Judge Kimba] Wood who had 'management experience....'" As I told Weisberg, anyone who bothered to inspect the record would quickly conclude that my wife does not have "management experience" as the term is commonly understood. I never recommended my wife for the job—on those terms or any other. Speaking for the president, White House Communications Director George Stephanopoulos confirms my denial of this allegation.

Weisberg says Clinton "reportedly told aides" after I played golf with him (as part of my coverage of the president-elect for a *Time* article) "that [I] had relentlessly talked up [my] wife." Again speaking for the president, Stephanopoulos denies this charge as well.

Weisberg says I "neither confirmed nor denied" that I leaked word of the president's interest in my wife as attorney general. But I *did* deny that allegation and I do so again. And so do the two journalists Weisberg mentions as recipients of my supposed "leak," Al Hunt of *The Wall Street Journal* and Tim Russert of NBC News, who have both written to TNR denying Weisberg's charge. Why didn't Weisberg call them before publication?

With respect to *The New York Times* piece Weisberg refers to: the *Times* got it wrong (as the paper later indicated). My wife didn't contradict me, as Weisberg says; she contradicted the *Times*'s incorrect story.

To support his charge that my coverage of Clinton "through the campaign and after" has been "soft," Weisberg says that "in one post-election piece [I] compared Clinton to Lincoln and FDR." The clear import is that I compared Clinton favorably to those two giants. In fact, I discussed Clinton's having compared himself to Lincoln and Roosevelt. There is a significant difference here and one that any reader of my piece would note straightaway—a reader without an ax to grind, that is.

Weisberg writes that "In his column 'The Political Interest,' Kramer never declared his own when he piled on criticisms of Zoe Baird's nomination" to be attorney general. In fact, the only time I mentioned Baird at all was after she withdrew her nomination. In a column about Senator Pat Moynihan I compared Moynihan's level of irritation with the White House to the public's upset over Baird's selection. Here is exactly what I wrote:

> "Not since November," says Pat Moynihan sadly. "Not a single call. Not from the president or any of his top people. I would have thought someone would have gotten in touch by now. I just don't get it."
>
> For the senator from New York, a giant intellect who has succeeded Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen as chairman of the powerful Finance Committee, these few whispered words are a warning shot at least the equal of the spontaneous outpouring of public outrage that doomed Zoe Baird last week.

"Call it Clincest," Weisberg writes. "Kramer and Wood were both part of an extended society of aspiring Clintonites...." Aside from her forty-minute interview with the president, my wife had never met or spoken with Clinton. She was approached by the White House to discuss her serving as attorney general without ever having expressed an interest in any job in the administration. I obviously have had a fair amount of contact with Clinton, but only as a reporter. We have never socialized.

MICHAEL KRAMER
Chief Political Correspondent
Time *Magazine*
New York, New York

To the editors:

In his story "Clincest," Jacob Weisberg writes that Michael Kramer recommended his wife, Judge Kimba Wood, to the president for nomination as attorney general. The president has instructed me to tell you that it never happened. Kramer never recommended his wife for that or any other position. Nor did the president subsequently tell anyone that "Kramer had relentlessly talked up his wife" during a golf game in Little Rock that included Kramer, the president and two other people. The president never told anyone that because that never happened either.

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS
Assistant to the President and
Director of Communications
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

Your Jacob Weisberg, in his piece on the Clinton ruling elite, alleges that *Time* magazine's Michael Kramer leaked the potential appointment of his wife, Kimba Wood, as attorney general to journalistic friends, including me. There are only two prob-

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lems: one, at that time I was 10,000 miles away in Asia, and two, alas, we were beaten on the possible Wood appointment by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. If this is the way Kramer takes care of his friends, I want on his enemies list.

We are all duly impressed that Weisberg paraded his prestigious academic credentials in the article. I wish, however, he would have learned one simple journalistic practice: to make a phone call to verify information.

ALBERT R. HUNT
Washington Bureau Chief
The Wall Street Journal
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

In his article "Clincest," Jacob Weisberg writes, "Kramer reportedly leaked the information to fellow journalists, including his friend Al Hunt of *The Wall Street Journal* and Tim Russert of NBC, who both had the story early."

NBC News broke the Kimba Wood story because of White House correspondent Andrea Mitchell, not me. Her source was not Michael Kramer, it was an administration official. If Weisberg or his fact-checker had called me, I would have told him just that.

TIMOTHY J. RUSSERT
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

I read Jacob Weisberg's outstanding article, "Clincest," with a mixture of amusement, horror and—I admit it—envy. Given my educational and vocational background and political views, I like to think that with one or two different turns in the road I could have been an FOB and FOH, rubbing shoulders with the powerful at Renaissance weekends.

The horror comes from the potential for disaster that arises from government by an inbred group of academics and intellectuals, however well-meaning. Here in Ohio we had a governor, Dick Celeste, who was a Democrat and former Rhodes scholar with a highly intelligent and outspoken wife. They surrounded themselves with like-minded people, and the result was a tenure marred by one scandal after another—and a Republican successor. I would like to hope Clinton will learn from our experience, but I'm not optimistic.

JEFFREY BENDIX
Cleveland Heights, Ohio

To the editors:

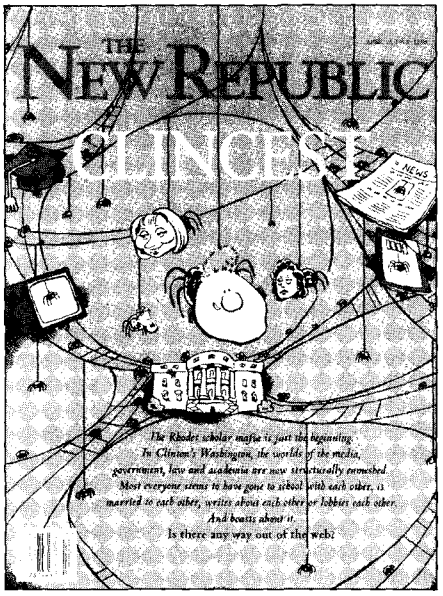
I am a subscriber to TNR and a fellow Oxonian (Keble '74, Jurisprudence). How come I'm just a mere lawyer and not in the White House? Or in the administration?

FRANKIE LEUNG
Los Angeles, California

Jacob Weisberg replies:

Michael Kramer's ability to summon a presidential denial is impressive (and supportive of my larger point about Clincest), but he's not telling the truth about what happened. My source, who was present in Little Rock through the transition, heard what Kramer said. He argued for his wife on the basis that, unlike other federal judges, she had "management experience," meaning the experience of managing complicated trials like Michael Milken's. This is a perfectly legitimate use of the term. In order to be fair to Kramer, I included his denials in my story, but I believe my source, not him. (A reporter for *The New York Observer*, who independently reported exactly the same story, came to the same conclusion.)

On the leaks to fellow journalists,


THE NEW REPUBLIC
CLINCEST
The Rhodes scholar mafia is just the beginning.
In Clinton's Washington, the worlds of the media,
government, law and academia are now structurally enmeshed.
Most everyone seems to have gone to school with each other, is
married to each other, writes about each other or lobbies each other.
And boasts about it.
Is there any way out of the web?

Kramer is simply fictionalizing, as my notes of our telephone interview clearly demonstrate. For quotation, he would "neither confirm nor deny" that he leaked word of his wife's imminent appointment to Russert and Hunt. I thought it was weird that he wouldn't simply deny it on the record if, as he claimed, it never happened. So I pressed him on the point. Kramer would not deny it for the record. He told me, however, that Hunt and Russert would deny it, a strangely clairvoyant claim. What ethical journalists are supposed to do in such a situation is to refuse to say anything about who their sources are or are not. How did Kramer know Hunt and Russert would deny it if he didn't have an understanding with them? I did not think it necessary to hear Russert and Hunt recite what Kramer told me they would say. Maybe, for the record, I should have.

Kramer says the *Times* story reporting that Kimba Wood initially gave the White House "full details" of her employment of an illegal immigrant was wrong. Agreed. But, as Howard Kurtz of *The Washington Post* also reported, Kramer himself was the source for the article! After the White House and Wood denied the account, the *Times* published an explanatory story by a different reporter, which did not in fact "indicate" that the paper was at fault. It said: "the person who was interviewed for the Sunday article clearly seemed intent on conveying the impression that Judge Wood had been entirely forthcoming in her conversations with White House officials." Kramer still doesn't admit that he was the person doing the misleading.

Clinton indeed may have compared himself to Lincoln and FDR, but Kramer's article elaborates the comparison, at great length, and without skepticism. On his next point, my argument was that Kramer shouldn't have written about Zoe Baird *at all* without disclosing that his wife was in competition for the same job. On Clincest in general, I was talking about the attitude and aspirations of certain people around the Clinton administration, not about the amount of time or specific activities they have engaged in with the president himself. In any case, Kramer has socialized with the president, as he himself acknowledges in his letter, in playing golf with him. Or is there some reason why that doesn't count?

Al Hunt is playing games. The *Times* and *Post* beat the *Journal* with their February 2 stories reporting that Clinton had narrowed the list to several women, one of whom was Kimba Wood. The *Journal* reported this on February 3. These are the stories Hunt appends to his letter. But it was the *Journal*, as I wrote, that scooped the *Times* and the *Post* with its February 4 story reporting that Wood was about to be named. That day, the *Times* and *Post* both reported a short list of three including Wood, Gerald Baliles and Charles Ruff. Whether Hunt was still 10,000 miles away on February 4 I cannot say, but I don't see why that absolves him in any case. There are telephones in Asia.

A reliable source tells me that Russert, too, received early information about Wood from his friend Kramer. That is actually consistent with a close reading of his letter; perhaps Russert passed the tip to Andrea Mitchell, who then "got the story" from an administration official, or perhaps Mitchell got it independently. It doesn't mean Russert didn't hear from Kramer.

George Stephanopoulos writes that the president "has instructed" him to deny that Kramer recommended his wife. Stephanopoulos was present at the Little Rock interview. If Kramer never mentioned Kimba Wood, why doesn't Stephanopoulos say so unambiguously himself? I stand by my original version.

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Working Together

The scene is a tenth reunion and three college friends run into each other. They are all teachers, and soon they begin to talk shop. Two of them are fed up. One says she is a stickler for the rules and pushes her students hard. The other admits that she tends to be easy on her kids because "They have enough problems already." But as different as their approaches are, the two agree that most kids nowadays are hopeless; they can't or won't learn. On the other hand, the third teacher, who teaches in a school with the same kinds of students as her friends, says that most of her kids are good workers and achievers. She is now trying some new ways of running her classes. Cooperative learning is one of them, and so far the youngsters are doing well.

How can we account for the friends' different attitudes and experiences with their similar students? It could be differences in talent or temperament, but a recent study, "Contexts That Matter for Teaching and Learning," by Milbrey McLaughlin and Joan Talbert, suggests another possibility. McLaughlin and Talbert found that the degree of collegiality in a school, and especially a department within a school, makes an enormous difference in teachers' response to their students and in students' achievement.

The survey involved nearly 900 teachers in 16 California and Michigan high schools. In noncollegial settings, where teachers seldom if ever discuss their teaching with colleagues—and would be uneasy doing so—McLaughlin and Talbert found that teachers tend to stick with the methods they are used to. And they do this even if the methods do not and have never worked very well. As a result, they often get discouraged, and they often conclude that their students are not capable of learning.

Teachers in a professional community feel more positive about their teaching, and their students are more successful than youngsters taught by noncollegial teachers.

But in collegial settings, teachers are accustomed to consulting colleagues and using them as resources. Not only does this provide help with immediate problems; it also leads teachers to continually look at and question their teaching practices and work to make them more effective. McLaughlin and Talbert's data show that teachers in this kind of professional community feel more positive about their teaching and their students and that their students are substantially more successful than youngsters taught by the noncollegial teachers.

We can see the connection between collegiality and good teaching in the successful schools of some other industrial nations. As Harold Stevenson and James Stigler tell us in *The Learning Gap* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), one reason Asian teachers get excellent results with their students is that teachers in a given grade work together, over time, to plan and then to revise their lessons.

Other professions also understand this connection. Lawyers routinely consult each other about their cases, and education reformer Phillip Schlechty describes how health-care providers in teaching hospitals hold a "mortality and morbidity conference" after a patient dies. Everyone who had anything to do with the patient is involved in reconstructing the record of treatment. What was the diagnosis on admission? What treatments were ordered? What were the results? And what might have been done differently? These conferences are not a way of assigning blame: They are an ongoing education program that helps the health professionals analyze their performance and decide how they might improve it.

McLaughlin and Talbert's findings about good teaching and collegiality have important implications for professional development and for school reform. Most districts think of professional development in terms of courses or workshops that train teachers in what is considered good teaching practice. But what kind of course could possibly compare with a group of teachers acknowledging problems, sharing ideas, trying new ways of doing things and evaluating results on an ongoing basis? And what kind of reform instituted from the outside could possibly be successful without this kind of professional community to support it?

Because the professional community the study talks about involves teachers' working together at a school level, some people will be reminded of shared decision making, a strategy for education reform that has lately swept the schools. The two are not inconsistent with one another, but shared decision making is usually a question of school governance and administration—how will the bell schedule be set up or where will the computers be relocated? In contrast, collegiality has a powerful effect on the quality of teaching—in other words, on the basic mission of the school. If McLaughlin and Talbert are right, the best investment the national or state or local governments could make in education would be to start helping to build this ongoing process in all our schools.

To order "Contexts that Matter...," send a check for $3.50, payable to Stanford Univ., to Julie Cummer, Teacher Context Center, CERAS Bldg., Stanford, CA 94305-3084.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1993 by Albert Shanker.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MAY 24, 1993

A FORCE OF LIMITS

As of this writing, we do not know whether the Bosnian Serb parliament has acceded to its leadership's demands and signed on to the Vance-Owen plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina. But we do know this possibility would never have emerged without a credible threat of American action. It's a simple instrument, when you come to think of it—diplomacy backed by the threat of force—but the only one that has a constant chance of success. In a sign that Democratic diplomacy has turned a corner, the first Democratic administration in a generation has restored that truth to the party in government. For the future success of U.S. foreign policy, that's some achievement. Those of us who believed Messrs. Christopher and Clinton were incapable of such a judgment owe them something of an apology.

But the Balkan moment is not over. If it were to end in failure or disaster, this precedent would not only be jeopardized but discredited, which is why the secretary of state is right to insist on precise goals and methods for a possible U.S. intervention. For even if Radovan Karadzic signs on the dotted line, we will probably not have heard the last of Serbian designs. Partitions have a way of not holding. The lines drawn on mandatory Palestine in 1947 were too much for Cairo to resist, and the lines of another partitioned British holding planted the seeds of the 1971 Indian intervention that wrenched Bangladesh out of Pakistan. The power-sharing arrangements of the pre-1975 Lebanese government, which smack of Vance-Owen's weak central Bosnian government, did not survive the upset that came when Palestinians were added to the delicate balance. We could go on.

This is why the most worrying aspect of the last week has been the way Vance-Owen has suddenly become the focus of American action. The debate has shifted from one that stressed stopping genocide by ending the arms embargo and threatening air strikes to one in which Vance-Owen is to be enforced, or rather indefinitely policed, by thousands of American and European forces in an open-ended attempt to bring peace to the entire region. *The Washington Post* headline on Wednesday was: U.S. PLANS FAST THRUST OF TROOPS INTO BOSNIA. From being excessively cautious, the Clinton administration could stumble into being excessively activist in its attempts to bring peace.

Our goals in the Balkans, to reiterate, are simple: to end genocide now and restore a regional balance of power that is the only guarantee against its recurrence. Our goals are not to wage anyone else's war; nor are they to resolve (as if we could!) the intensifying grievances and hatreds that infest the region. The appropriate weapons in this limited effort are arming the victims of aggression and threatening military strikes against those who commit atrocities. Our aims are not to reclaim a mountain, or to restore a village or a valley to the side that demands it; they are not to find some perfect political recipe for the Balkan stew. Vance-Owen, with its arcane cartography and exquisitely calibrated constitutional compromises, is a testimony to Western hope over Balkan experience; if American prestige is invested to ensure its complete success, then it will be invested in almost certain failure. It is a sure sign of a bad plan that it immediately requires tens of thousands of armed policemen to enforce it.

So let the Bosnian Serbs sign on to the Vance-Owen partition, if they wish; and let them comply with its demands; and let the threat of outside force and of an end to the arms embargo on the Bosnians be the lever that keeps them honest. We certainly hope that Vance-Owen foils the low expectations that we have of it, and that, combined with the threat of force, it thus provides an interlude in the Balkan implosion. But there is a difference between supporting a plan that has proved itself and impetuously investing vast military resources and diplomatic prestige in a plan that, on the surface, looks like a recipe for endless revision and contention. At the moment, a little restraint is in order. In the meantime, Clinton's first strategy still makes the most sense: threatened air strikes and rearmament of the Muslims. Until now, it has concentrated the Serbs' minds wonderfully. At a minimal risk to U.S. lives and prestige, why should it not continue to do so? •

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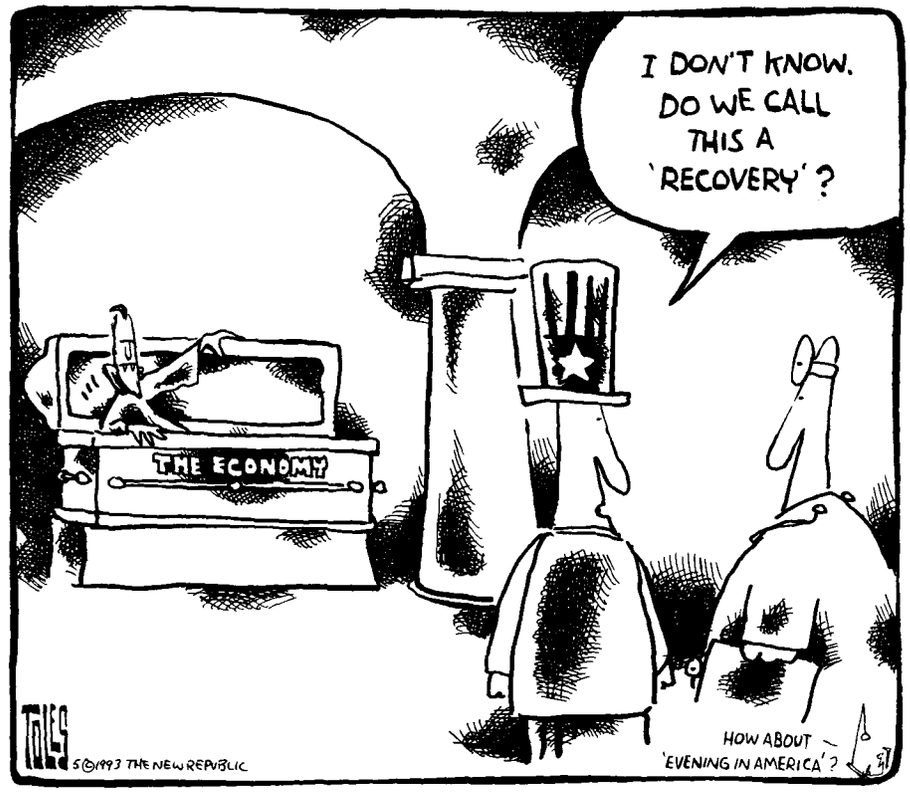
NOTEBOOK

RENO SUCK-UP WATCH: "Suddenly, Ms. Reno has vaulted to national prominence.... She has become a prized asset, a popular figure whose candid, caring tone has neutralized critics.... Inside the department, Ms. Reno roams the halls to shake hands with startled employees and has given a spate of speeches, frequently evoking the idealism of Robert F. Kennedy."—*The New York Times*, May 1, 1993
(Thanks to Anthony Wright, Amherst, Massachusetts.)

CLINCEST, CONT'D: Last week Janet Reno named most of the Justice Department's assistant attorneys general. Among her appointments: Frank Hunger, Al Gore's brother-in-law, will run the Civil Division; Anne Bingaman, wife of New Mexico Senator Jeff Bingaman, will head the Antitrust Division; Eleanor Dean Acheson, granddaughter of Dean Acheson and Wellesley friend of Hillary's, will head the Office of Policy Development; Sheila Foster Anthony, wife of former Arkansas democratic congressman Beryl Anthony (and close friend of the Clintons'), was picked to run the Office of Legislative Affairs; Lani Guinier, a Yale Law classmate of the Clintons' and a friend, was chosen as assistant A.G. for Civil Rights; Gerald Torres, Yale Law grad *and* Children's Defense Fund alum (a twofer!), will head the Environment and Natural Resources division. On the other hand, none of the DOJ selections was a Rhodes Scholar.



YOURS INSINCERELY: Perhaps the most poignant part of John Frohnmayer's new book on his doomed tenure as chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts is his account of his resignation letter. His first draft, a two sentence note sent to the White House, prompted a call from Edith Holiday, the secretary to the cabinet. She said it was "awfully curt" and might "leave the wrong impression," and asked him to pad it out and "say something nice about the president." Gentleman Frohnmayer obligingly rewrote the letter to include routine sycophantic blather about how much Bush's "personal support has meant to me during these difficult times" and express his sincere belief that "you and your administration have accomplished a great deal and I'm sure the best is yet to come." The president's brief response, in contrast, didn't even muster the usual expression of regret, an omission duly noted by the press. The White House itself even put out the word that Frohnmayer had been summarily fired. Here endeth the last possible thing that could be said in defense of President Bush. When push came to shove, he couldn't even write a nice thank-you note.

SEX, LIES AND THE ETHICS COMMITTEE: You may have heard of the upcoming, open hearings on Senator Bob Packwood, and may even have believed they had something to do with sexual harassment. Well, not exactly. Bowing to petitions signed by 200 Oregonians, the Senate Rules Committee is holding hearings May 10 on whether Packwood should be unseated for election fraud because he lied to *The Oregonian* last November about sexual harassment allegations against him and intimidated other women from talking to the press about their harassment. Actual Ethics Committee hearings on the issue of his sexual conduct are not certain to be held and, even if they are, won't take place for several more months and may not be public. This is a useful reminder of the Senate's inability to discipline its own: instead of focusing on the central issue, Oregonians are forced to target an activity—lying to reporters—without which our entire political process would grind to a halt.

HOME NEWS: With this issue, David Shipley replaces Dorothy Wickenden as executive editor. David comes from the op-ed page of *The New York Times*. Weston Kosova becomes managing editor and Jacob Weisberg a senior editor, to concentrate on political and cultural reporting. •

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THE FLAPJACK FILE

BURN FOR MAMA

By Douglas G. McGrath

Saturday, April 17, 1993

At approximately 6:17 a.m., Agent Searle and I reported to personal quarters for duty. Agent Simons, who was guarding the door, showed us a picture of his boys Sam and Alex. It was some kind of trick shot where they looked like they were standing on top of the Washington Monument. Simons said there's a guy who takes these right on the Mall and they make real cute Christmas cards. I'll tell Annie. Then we heard Flapjack and the Rod yelling again. The first thing was, "I am *not* some piece of decoration! You *promised* I could have a role once we got here!" to which she said, "I know, Bill, but there's just not that much for you to do!"

The door opened. The Rod came out, followed by Mr. Steph. The right lens of his glasses was cracked and there was oatmeal on the other. "Somebody call Armani Occhiali!" he shouted as he followed the Rod toward the Oval Office. Mary, one of the maids, came out next, looking a little shell-shocked. "Well," she said, "that's the last of the Reagan china!"

Flapjack was last. He stopped and shook our hands. "I'm sorry you had to hear all that, guys." He bit his lip sympathetically. "It must have been painful for you. Although I'm not to blame for the noise, I want credit for taking the responsibility and I feel your pain." He took a teacup handle out of his hair. "Agent Duke, how's your wife, your unfortunate income tax audit and the discoloration trouble you were having with your lawn?" Before I could answer he said, "Agent Simons, thank you for recommending the Stephen King book, which I read last night before rereading Hobsbawm's *Industry and Empire*. How did Sam Jr.'s check-up go? Any cavities in addition to the two you once mentioned? Though it wasn't my fault, I had cavities myself as a boy. We didn't have money to correct them, because this was still a country of trickle-down where the rich didn't pay their fair share and the middle class worked harder for less money than they made ten years ago. But we fixed those cavities by believing in a place called Hope. Agent Searle, anything upsetting you'd like to tell me about?"

But before Searle could answer, Flapjack started running. "Sorry! I've got to catch Hillary before she locks that door—"

He got his foot in the Oval Office door just before the Rod closed it. She sighed and chewed on her headband for a minute. "All right, Bill," she said. "You can talk to Janet Reno about the stand-off in Waco." He said thank you and tried to kiss her. "Not now!" she whispered, as several people in black hoods approached. "My health group is here."

We spent the morning with Mr. Steph. A woman named Annie Leibovitz was photographing him for the centerfold of *Seventeen*. She told us she doesn't usually work for *Seventeen*, but she's the only photographer Mr. Steph will work with anymore, so she made an exception.

Then we took Flap over to Justice to meet with Janet Reno. When we came in she was burning a phone book. There were stacks of old ones right by her desk. "Anytime we do a raid," she said, "I have the guys bring me these little beauties. They go up in seconds! Do what you want with the drugs, I tell 'em, but get the tinder to me!" She took a can of Final Net and sprayed it over the top of the fire. The flames leapt up. Ms. Reno let out a laugh. "Look at it jump! Come on! Jump for Mama!"

Flap bit his lip and smiled that eerie near-Carter smile he's got. "You know, Janet, one of my favorite songs from Elvis's post-skinny years is 'Burning Love.' And one of the things I miss most about Arkansas are the walks my daughter Chelsea and I used to take by the river near the chicken rendering plant. We used to walk along that shore and throw matches on the river and watch the surface burn. It was beautiful!" Ms. Reno grinned.

Then they discussed the stand-off in Waco. Ms. Reno said that the FBI wanted to move. She said, "Our agents in the field are getting really tired, so we might as well—"

"Move when they're tired?"

"Exactly. Think how surprised the other side will be when they see we're moving in such poor condition."

He nodded. "One more question, and it's the question any tough leader has to ask: If this thing is a bust, will you take the blame?" She scrunched up her mouth and tilted her head uncertainly. "There's a Manhattan phone book in it for you," he said.

She said she'd take the blame.

On our way home, Flap said, "I think Hillary's going to give me a lot more to do when she sees how *that* turns out!"

Thursday, April 22, 1993

The compound in Waco was leveled. The Rod will now handle all law enforcement issues. Flap doesn't mind. He's just worried that Ms. Reno will have to resign and he'll be forced to find another female attorney general.

"I guess I'd better try to get people's minds onto something else," he said. "I think I'll call Hillary and see if she'll let me have some air strikes in Bosnia."

She couldn't take his call right then, so, while we waited for her to call back, Simons and I helped him pick out some new china.

DOUGLAS G. MCGRATH is a New York writer.

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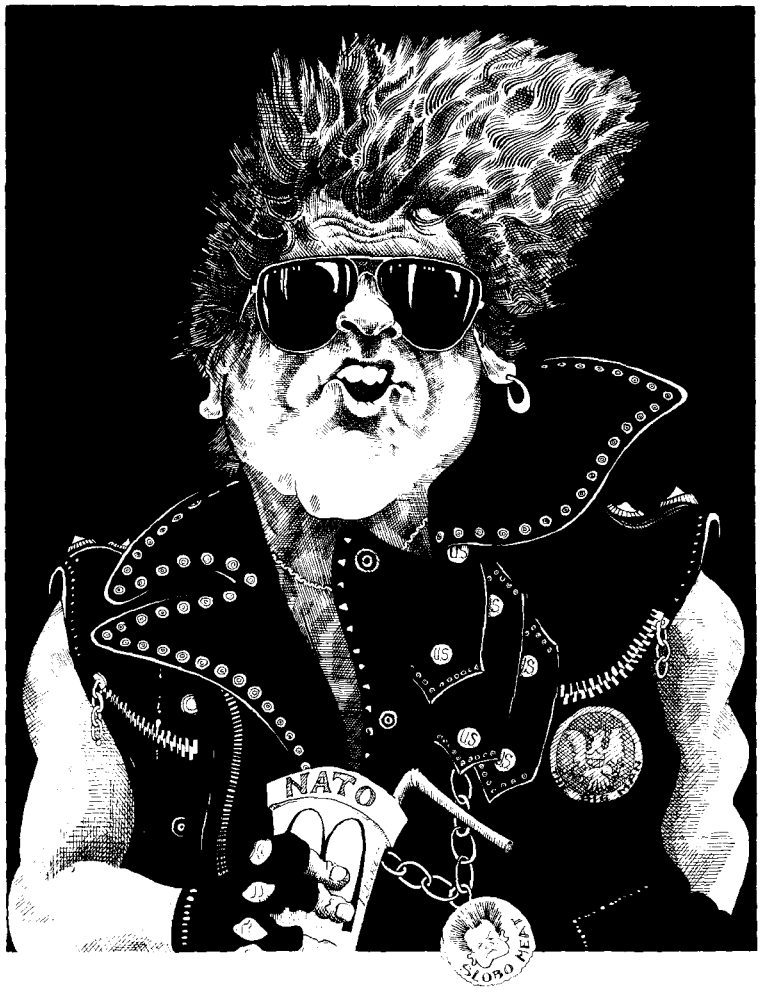
WHITE HOUSE WATCH

A STAR IS BORN

By Fred Barnes

For President Clinton, it turns out the operative analogy to Bosnia is not Vietnam or Beirut but the Persian Gulf. The foe in both cases was a bloodthirsty aggressor bent on gobbling up the territory of a not-exactly-saintly ethnic rival. Friendly persuasion, the first step, was tried to no effect. Next, economic sanctions were applied, then tightened, but failed to alter the aggressor's behavior. As a last resort, the use of American military force was threatened. The mere threat didn't work against Saddam in the Gulf, so force was actually used. In Bosnia it worked, at least partly because Desert Storm had made the threat of U.S. military intervention infinitely more credible. The Serbs, both in Bosnia and Serbia, knuckled under and accepted a peace settlement, subject to parliamentary ratification.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Clinton owes President Bush a debt for Desert Storm, but mostly it's the president himself and his top advisers who deserve credit for this foreign policy success. They deftly changed direction in mid-April without a bitter struggle inside the administration or a spate of recriminations in Congress. Until then, the Clinton position, based on the notion that there are no good guys in the Bosnian conflict, had been half-heartedly to back the peace process promoted by former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and British politician David Owen. When a Defense Department official was quoted in early April as saying that air strikes against Serbian forces were a live option—Defense Secretary Les Aspin was the unnamed author of the remark—a senior aide of Secretary of State Warren Christopher called the Pentagon to complain and to silence further talk of force. As the war in Bosnia continued, Clintonites despaired of finding a peaceful solution but remained wary of getting too involved. "This is the most goddamn difficult issue any country has faced in many years," groaned Assistant Secretary of State Strobe Talbott.

What prompted the policy shift was the refusal of the Bosnian Serbs to sign the peace plan negotiated by Vance and Owen and, more importantly, the brutal Serb advance on the Muslim town of Srebrenica. The "principal's committee"—Christopher, Aspin, national security adviser Anthony Lake, CIA Director James Woolsey, U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright—had been meeting off and on for weeks on Bosnia. Now Clinton began attending meetings and, as an aide put it, "focusing on Bosnia like a laser." The shift was soon apparent in Clinton's public comments. When he and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak met with reporters on April 6, Clinton insisted there "is some chance that we can make this peace process work." At a news conference on April 23, his tack had shifted. "I think we should act," he said. "We should lead." He said limited air strikes against the Serbs and lifting the arms embargo against Bosnian Muslims "deserve some serious consideration." Clinton's aides were moving, too. Republican Senator Richard Lugar, a hawk on Bosnia, chatted with Lake at a dinner party at the home of Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's national security adviser. Lugar was delighted to find that Lake favored stronger action against the Serbs.

The take-charge strategy was hardly risk-free. One problem was Russian President Boris Yeltsin. Before his summit with Yeltsin in Vancouver on April 4 and 5, Clinton got a special briefing on the Serbian issue in Russian politics. Yeltsin, he learned, is no fan of Serbian leaders, regarding them as unrepentant Communists and allies

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of his enemies in Moscow. But the Serbian issue is especially touchy because hundreds of Russian volunteers are fighting alongside the Serbs. In Vancouver Clinton and Yeltsin discussed Serbia and Bosnia intensively. Yeltsin wanted Clinton to stick with the peace process and not take tougher steps against Serbia. He made it clear he understood that a U.S-Russian spat over Bosnia—a Russian veto of stiffer sanctions at the U.N., say—might cripple U.S. support for reform in Russia. Clinton said he'd try not to do anything that would play into the hands of Yeltsin's pro-Serbia adversaries before the April 25 referendum in Russia. His aim was to avoid complicating life for Yeltsin, but he added that the United States has an obligation to stop the bloodshed in Bosnia.

Clinton couldn't deliver on his side of the tacit bargain. (At his April 23 news conference Clinton said, "I have not made any agreement, and [Yeltsin] did not ask for that." This was technically true, but somewhat misleading.) The problem was the Serbian siege of Srebrenica, gruesome scenes of which were playing on American T.V. When the administration and European allies sought to strengthen U.N. sanctions against Serbia, Russian Ambassador Yuli Vorontsov threatened a veto. In the end, a deal was worked out: stiffened sanctions were delayed until after the referendum and Vorontsov abstained from the Security Council vote. Still, a veto seemed possible until the moment of the vote on April 17, and the episode unsettled Clinton. He feared his top foreign policy goal, steering Russia safely to democracy and capitalism, was in jeopardy.

A second problem was the military. The conventional view at the Pentagon, not shared by Aspin, was that air strikes wouldn't work, and might get American pilots killed or captured. Admiral David Jeremiah, the top deputy of General Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spread this view in the press. At a three-hour White House meeting with congressional leaders on April 27, he was at it again. When Clinton ducked out for twenty minutes for a ceremony honoring the NCAA champion men's (University of North Carolina) and women's (Texas Tech) basketball teams, Jeremiah was questioned repeatedly by members of Congress. His pessimism spurred General Merrill McPeak, the Air Force chief of staff, to announce later that air strikes would be easy. Aspin was appalled at this public rift, but did nothing to stop it.

The other problem was Congress. Hawks were plentiful, including some like Lugar and Democratic Senator Bob Kerrey of Nebraska, who thought Clinton had made a mistake when he ruled out deploying U.S. ground troops against the Serbs. But doves sounded off when Clinton gathered nine senators and twelve House members at the April 27 session in the State Dining Room. GOP congressman Doug Bereuter of Nebraska favored lifting the arms embargo, but not injecting American force. Democrat John Murtha of Pennsylvania backed intervention but wondered if other hawks would turn dovish once body bags began coming home. Clinton, who only asked questions, was moving toward a decision to send in American warplanes. He asked one question several times: What if limited U.S. military intervention fails? Both Lugar and Bob Dole said Clinton couldn't let that happen. In other words, he'd have to use enough force to guarantee success.

The decision, known as "lift and strike," was made four days later at a Saturday morning meeting at the White House. Some Clinton aides, notably Albright and a handful of State Department underlings, had been pushing for this all along. The actual plan for lifting the embargo and dispatching limited air strikes was worked out by Christopher and Lake. No timetable for implementation was set, but it was to be "sooner rather than later," an official said. Or maybe never. Since consideration of force had driven the Bosnian Serbs back to the negotiating table, perhaps the threat of force would impel them to settle. It did, roughly twenty-four hours after White House aides left the May 1 meeting and let it be known Clinton had taken the military option.

Clinton's brilliant success in his first foreign policy foray involving military force brought with it two ironic twists. By reversing his initial policy, he redeemed a campaign promise. As a candidate, he'd zinged Bush for passivity in the face of Serbian atrocities and said he'd consider air strikes and more. The second twist: after rejecting the use of ground troops to fight Serbs, Clinton now is obligated to send as many as 30,000 to Bosnia as "peacekeepers." If U.S. troops must go, the military argues that "a division plus," big enough to throw its weight around and protect itself, should be deployed. With so many heavily armed Serbs at large, American ground troops may have to fight after all. Just as in the Gulf. •

MOSCOW POSTCARD

MAY DAY

By Liesl Schillinger

There could not have been a more perfect May Day in Moscow this year; the skies were bright blue, and the lilacs were blooming. There was no parade in Red Square, as there had been for seventy-odd years, but the mood was festive nonetheless, as Russians started a four-day holiday. Girls walked around Gorky Park in the strumpet-short skirts that are popular here this spring—thigh-high, they end a foot or so above the knee, leaving very, very little to the imagination—while boys on roller skates zoomed between them on the footpaths and strains of percussion from a heavy metal concert in Gorky Park's Green Theater thrummed in the air. Not too far off, in Gagarin Square, license of another kind was being exercised, as 5,000 anti-Yeltsin

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demonstrators, Communist hard-liners, nationalists and fascists wrested shields from policemen, threw stones, burned buses and streetcars and waved banners that said, "Mother Russia is calling" and "Yeltsin go to Hell." A street banner overhead seemed darkly ironic, reading: "Congratulations on the festival, Dear Russians!"

At noon, as the police turned water cannons on the angry, bloodied crowd, families in Gorky Park began picnicking, the occasional paterfamilias strolling off to ask a passing miniskirted girl for her phone number. Russia today may be a country of extreme contrasts, but one constant unites it all: after a long, long winter, the sap is flowing, and rebellion is in the air.

Last week I went to the Shamrock Pub, a popular Western watering hole. Here was a standard New York-style bar, filled with well-dressed men and women, tourists and businesspeople, speaking English and paying dollars. I soon found myself in the company of four towering Western men, who turned out to form the core of the DHL delivery service in Moscow. "What are you doing here?" I asked them. An American-Dutch-Frenchman, strikingly handsome and probably six-foot-four, said, "I saw *Doctor Zhivago* when I was six, and ever since then I knew I wanted to come here. I fell in love with Julie Christie." "She's English," I pointed out. "Close enough," he said, and they began to joke about the beautiful Russian women they meet in Moscow.

The young women in Moscow take great pains to look beautiful, and many of them succeed. Earlier in the week, at the posh Metropol Hotel, I had met some Americans at the Café-Confectionery and relaxed over three-dollar coffees. The café was splendid and stately; dark wood, gold-rimmed china, a polished pastry case, high ceilings. Two young Russian women came in, tall, slim, elegant, and they glided into seats at a free table. Their posture was impeccable, their manners refined. For them, coming to this café was an occasion, and perhaps a way of meeting some unattached foreign banker. We Americans, wearing jeans, slouching, riffling through books, served as a foil to their beauty. Their appeal was easy to see, and it was aimed at any Western man, no matter how slovenly, uneducated or grasping he might be. Not that they were prostitutes—and this town is packed with them—but there is a tacit understanding that women here are on the lookout for husbands, which men from more emancipated countries can't help but find gratifying, and which their Russian counterparts can't help but find infuriating. And when handsome, successful men like the DHL crew come along ... all the lights go on, and it's all systems go.

But you don't have to go to the Metropol to get a glimpse of the collective consciousness; turn on your prehistoric television and modern Russian T.V. pops out at you. All conversation stops at dinner parties when the quiz show "Field of Wonder" comes on (a combination of "Wheel of Fortune" and "Let's Make a Deal"). Thunderstruck contestants spin a wheel, get money for guessing letters correctly and, when the spinner lands on "Prize," agonize between accepting a fistful of cash or a mystery prize that is brought out in a sealed chest—maybe a C.D. player, maybe just a bottle of beer. Young people watch Channel "Two by Two," an MTV-Fox Television mesh that has cartoons, news and a Candid Camera show called "Express Camera." (Last week's question: In the summer, is it good to have sex with some random woman? Two men said they didn't know and rushed off embarrassed; one older man said, "Maybe," and a young guy said, "Sure." The moderator presented these findings with mock seriousness.) There are also Australian and Spanish-language soap operas, in which all voices are simultaneously translated by a gruff, male Russian voice. The most popular of these is an ancient serial called "My Second Mother"; late in the morning the GUM department store's television shop is packed with bystanders watching breathlessly.

The most telling thing on T.V. is the advertisements. They've got the same Procter & Gamble-type ads that we have in the West—a kerchiefed housewife raves, "Would you believe it? All the stains are gone! What whiteness!" Only she is shown scrubbing the shirts ruthlessly in a tin tub, not just tossing them in a machine, because no one has washing machines. I admit, I bought the detergent, Ariel, and it works just fine. What whiteness.

The political ads are even more interesting, and the ones for Yeltsin before the April 25 referendum were a triumph of public relations. T.V. went wild with spot ads for *Nash Yeltsin*, "Our Yeltsin," and with man-on-the-street montages of the "Da, Da, Nyet, Da" campaign. "Da" for Yeltsin, "Da" for his reforms, "Nyet" to early Russian presidential elections, "Da" to early parliamentary elections. Punks at public telephones, old women shopping for groceries, people standing in line—all blurted out the phrase when prompted. The ad closed with two little children—Russians are sentimental—reciting the winning formula in unison. A television special on Yeltsin at home with his family, arriving late, complaining about his tea and generally behaving like a Russian man, won over many voters. "Before I wasn't sure; now I know he is like us," a janitress told me.

But the anti-Yeltsin forces are less susceptible to advertising wiles. Before the referendum I ran into one of their demonstrations on the streets. The protesters had "Nyet, Nyet, Da, Nyet" posters, perversely contradicting the popular line. They now claim that the referendum didn't count because advertising was unfairly balanced in Yeltsin's favor. They have a point, of course, but if someone else were in power, all advertising would probably stop, mooting their objection.

The May Day demonstration, by far the worst of the spring, showed the tactics they understand. On the popular television talk show, "Press Club," journalists and spectators argued for an hour after brutal footage of the riots was shown. Many demanded that the perpetrators be tried in court, and everyone seemed to agree that "force calls for force" and that Yeltsin needed to show his hand. Only one voice raised another possibility. A beautiful woman from Abkhazia, a province of the former Soviet Union now being ravaged by civil war,

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spoke next to last, quietly and emotionally. "This may sound strange, but I want to suggest that you don't treat these perpetrators too harshly," she said. "Because that could lead to civil war. That has happened in my country, and I can tell you, nothing is worse than civil war. I hope all of you understand: nothing is worse than that." Her words were lost in the general uproar.

As I walked in Gorky Park after the riot, roller skaters told me there was nothing to fear—democracy was here to stay. I met a boy wearing actual American in-line skates, *rollniki,* he called them, who was covered with scrapes, and was bleeding from the elbow. "Be careful," I warned. "You need elbow pads." "It's not necessary," he disagreed. He offered me a beer, which I took, but I hesitated and told him that in America we have to cover alcoholic drinks in public, usually by hiding them in a paper bag. He laughed. "Not here," he said. "This is a free country."

LIESL SCHILLINGER is editor of the English-language edition of *Moscow Magazine.*

The Arab logic against peace.

NOTHING DOING

By Kenneth Levin

Popular wisdom holds that peace between Arabs and Israelis is just over the horizon and that Israeli policies, particularly in the form of concessions, will elicit peace. This wisdom rests on a dangerous misperception of Middle East reality. While the negotiations begun by the Bush administration may yield a more secure armistice, a genuine Arab-Israeli peace, in which Israel is accepted as a legitimate presence in the Middle East, is not currently within reach.

The blunt truth is that Israeli actions count for little in the scheme of forces that shape Arab policies toward the Jewish state. Of far greater potency are domestic considerations within Arab countries, inter-Arab politics and the dynamics of religious and cultural forces in the Arab Middle East. These factors weigh overwhelmingly against Arab recognition of Israel's legitimacy, and no Israeli inducement can provide an effective counterweight.

A recurrent theme in recent discussions of the Middle East is that political and social trends in the Arab world are already pushing the Arabs toward peace. It is suggested, in particular, that relatively moderate and Western-oriented regimes, increasingly fearful of Islamic fundamentalism and other threatening forces, are more prepared than ever for accommodation with Israel. But, as a brief survey of the various Arab states demonstrates, this argument is conspicuously flawed.

The nation most cited in such discussions is Saudi Arabia. Certainly Saudi Arabia feels threatened from many quarters: fundamentalist Iran, a potentially resurgent Iraq, a significant Shi'ite minority and domestic Islamic fundamentalism of both Sunni and Shi'ite varieties. But why would any of this make Saudi Arabia more likely to recognize Israel's legitimacy? Peace with Israel adds nothing to Saudi Arabia's physical security, as Israel does not threaten the Saudis. Any indirect military support Israel might offer a Saudi regime faced with Iranian or Iraqi threats would in fact be offered even in the absence of peace, just as Israel aided Jordan in 1970 when Jordan was threatened by Syria.

Nor would peace with Israel add anything to Saudi Arabia's access to Western military goods and Western protection, which are available to the Saudis now. Peace with Israel also offers very little gain to the Saudis economically. Israel is a minor economic power; the trade benefits would be marginal. And the Saudis already have virtually free access to Western economies. A common argument is that the Saudis will move toward peace with Israel for the sake of American goodwill. But the Saudis know they can count on that goodwill whatever their stance, simply because the United States depends on Saudi oil. They feel no more obliged to accommodate Israel for America's sake than they feel obliged to undertake democratic reforms or eliminate repressive domestic policies for America's sake.

In contrast, there are definite dangers for a Saudi regime in making peace with Israel. Offended by the Western presence during the Gulf war, domestic fundamentalists have recently stepped up attacks on the regime for its alleged receptiveness to decadent, non-Muslim, mainly American influences. The fundamentalists have already condemned the very limited steps the regime has taken toward accommodation with Israel; more substantive steps would provoke further charges of treason and sacrilege. Radical neighboring states, such as Iran, and rejectionist Palestinian forces would also likely increase attacks on the Saudi regime.

Of the Arab states, Jordan would appear to have the most to gain from peace with Israel. Lacking the oil wealth and military power of other Arab countries, it could benefit economically and strategically from cooperation with the Israelis. But would the benefits outweigh the dangers to King Hussein's regime? Jordan is already threatened by domestic fundamentalists, who won more seats than any other bloc in the newly reformed Jordanian parliament. The fundamentalists are vehemently opposed to peace with Israel; at the time of the Madrid Conference opening the peace talks in October 1991, the speaker of the Jordanian parliament led an official delegation to the Tehran "rejectionist conference," the trumpeted theme of which was "Israel must be destroyed." The fundamentalists are almost certain to become more of a threat to the regime should King Hussein agree to

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peace. The majority Palestinian population in Jordan is also likely to attack King Hussein as a traitor should he agree to any rapprochement with Israel that fails to satisfy Palestinian demands.

What of the arguments that peace with Israel would strengthen Jordan against external threats from Syria and Iraq? In fact, Israel, even in the absence of a peace treaty, already provides Jordan a shield against attack from its neighbors by acting as a tacit ally, as it did in 1970. At that time, Syria began an invasion of Jordan in support of a Palestinian uprising and then withdrew when Israel, partly at the behest of the United States, mobilized and threatened to intervene.

Some observers interpret recent steps by King Hussein, particularly his agreeing with Israel to a statement of principles for future accords, as reflecting a calculation that the economic and insurrectionist threats he faces are graver than the threats posed by peace with Israel. But does anyone believe that agreements with King Hussein, however formally and solemnly ratified, would survive a successful Islamic fundamentalist or Palestinian insurrection in Jordan?

In the case of Syria, the prevailing argument holds that loss of Soviet backing has forced a new openness toward peace with Israel. Others add that Syria is paying a high economic price for supporting terrorist organizations and for its belligerency toward Israel. Certainly the Syrian regime is eager to regain control of the Golan Heights, and President Hafez al-Assad may be prepared to make some limited gestures in exchange for reacquiring territory. But the loss of Syria's Soviet sponsor does not weigh in favor of peace on several counts. First, Syria has had no difficulty in continuing to acquire the most modern weaponry and technology, much of it still from the former Soviet Union, but now purchased with Saudi cash. Further, Assad does not expect an unprovoked Israeli attack, so military vulnerability would not warrant the political risks associated with pursuing peace.

Assad's political strength has been his status as leader of the most militant Arab state. The loss of Israel as an enemy would be a significant blow to his legitimacy. Internationally, the regime has become increasingly dependent on Iran for financial and strategic support. A rapprochement with Israel would mean loss of that support and might lead to Iranian financing of dissident Syrian fundamentalists, who could emerge as a threat to Assad.

Although some political support and economic gain might flow to Assad from the West in response to peace, Syria already has significant, Saudi-financed access to Western economic benefits. Greater access depends more on domestic stability and the state of the economy than on peace. Syria views development of its oil resources and access to hard currency, rather than accommodation with Israel, as the route to closer economic ties with the West, a perspective justified by past precedents of Western dealings with Arab regimes.

Even if the Syrians were to decide that the territorial gains to be had by accommodation were worth the political risk, Israelis and others interested in a genuine and durable peace must weigh the likely stability of any agreement. Much is made of the fact that Syria has adhered rather scrupulously to the truce agreements negotiated by Henry Kissinger in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. But that adherence has been predicated on Assad's having no viable war option and likely would not outlast his acquiring such an option. In addition, the dominance of Assad's minority Alawite sect will probably not outlive the current regime. Any successor government, which may well be fundamentalist, is likely to condemn Assad as an infidel usurper and balk at any treaties he signed.

The Palestinian Arabs are, of course, the Arab population most affected by Israeli policies. Yet here, too, other factors weigh more heavily than Israeli actions in shaping their attitudes toward peace. These include the deadly jockeying for power among Palestinian factions and the ever present threats posed by the most militant groups, those bent on adhering to the goal of Israel's destruction and on quashing even tactical accommodation. In addition, there is a broad conviction among Palestinians, recently reiterated by "moderate" leader Feisal Husseini, that any accommodation should be only a step toward the ultimate supplanting of Israel. All of this assures that any agreements will at most elicit a very pinched Palestinian acquiescence with much subsequent bloodletting, something far short of the peace and recognition Israel seeks.

Moreover, the notion that an accommodation with the Palestinians would encourage Arab states to make peace with Israel is wrongheaded. The Arab states have waged war against Israel in pursuit of their own national policies, not for the sake of the Palestinians, and they will not make peace for the sake of the Palestinians.

Those who believe that a peace accord is nonetheless near inevitably point to Israel and Egypt as proof that lasting peace is possible. But Israel's experience with Egypt prior to and since Camp David suggests that significant caveats are in order. The conditions that allowed Israel to reach its accords with Egypt were largely specific to Egypt and cannot be extrapolated to other Arab states. Egypt was, for example, in the unique position of possessing no oil resources with which to solve its crushing economic problems and yet being strategically so important that it could negotiate for very liberal levels of Western, particularly American, aid in return for an agreement with Israel. The largest Arab state by far, Egypt could weather the threat of Arab ostracism as no other state could. As the nation that had lost the most in territory, men and materiel in the various chapters of the war against Israel, and as the Arab Middle East state with the most developed national consciousness, it could invoke nationalism as a tool against pan-Arab polemics in its efforts to win support for peace.

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Psycho-Semitic

Hassan, an Iraqi businessman, is explaining to me that Saddam Hussein is conspiring with Israel to destroy Iraq. "During the early 1960s," he says, "Saddam spent four years in Egypt. For one of those years, no one knows exactly where he was. That's probably when he got his Mossad training."

Hassan is not entirely convinced Saddam is working for the Israelis, but he thinks it likely. He is certain Saddam is not bright enough to have brought Iraq to its knees all by himself. More likely, he is a pawn in the hands of the Western powers and Israel.

Conspiracy theories aren't unusual in the Arab world. Nor are they confined to Palestinian refugee camps, where the miserable and deprived will tell you that Boris Yeltsin works for the CIA. Traveling around the region, I have repeatedly found myself sitting in living rooms and book-lined offices, listening to scholars, businessmen or politicians weave surreal scenarios.

Yet, despite widespread belief in such theories among Arabs, many Israelis are surprised to hear of them, so isolated are they from Arab culture. Where Arabs see themselves as weak, victims of foreign plots over the past century, many Israelis regard Arabs as oil-rich and powerful. Israelis and Arabs therefore often misread each other's concerns. Arabs regard Israeli intentions as cynical manipulation; Israelis dismiss Arab talk of conspiracy as foolishness and fail to understand its origins. Such pervasive distrust makes a peace deal more remote than they realize.

For many Arabs, signs of nefarious aims are everywhere. Salama Ahmed Salama, the highly respected managing editor of Egypt's most important daily, *Al-Ahram*, recently described far-reaching manipulation by Israel in the arrest of Mohammed Salameh, a Palestinian carrying an Egyptian passport, in connection with the World Trade Center bombing. He described how both Israel's efforts to condemn radical Islam and a series of American policy decisions prior to the arrest were part of a plan to prepare world opinion for the arrest of a Muslim.

"In the same way that the killer of Robert Kennedy, following the 1967 Arab defeat, had to be the Palestinian Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, this time it was necessary that the perpetrator of the New York bombing be an American of Palestinian origin who was once in possession of an Egyptian passport," Salama wrote. "What a skillful international plan."

A Syrian diplomat who for years lived in the West told me that she was deeply worried about the growing turn toward fundamentalist Islam within Syria, especially among young women. She suspected she knew the reason for the trend: the Islamist radicals seducing the youngsters are, in fact, Jews, who secretly converted to Islam with the aim of corrupting the nation's youth.

A young, Western-educated Jordanian businessman told me his explanation for Israel's expulsion of 400 Palestinians to southern Lebanon last December. Israel, he said, created the Hamas organization in order to foil Palestinian nationalism. But Israel's grip on the leadership was slipping. So the Israelis selected a new group of leaders and, together with several hundred decoys, shipped them off to Lebanon, where they will become heroes of the struggle. Eventually, the Israelis will allow them to return, where they will form the new Hamas power structure. Then Israel will once again be fully in control.

The list of plots is boundless: Iraqis have told me that Israel controls the new autonomous Kurdistan. Palestinians have told me that the entire point of the allied no-flight zone over southern Iraq is an Israeli plot to take control of the region, because the Talmud was written in Babylon and the Jews are planning to reconquer the soil from which it sprung.

The conspiracy theories about the Jews and their relation to the West have two contradictory themes: In one general view, the Jews are evil supermen controlling the world. Fouad Ajami, a Lebanese-born scholar in Washington, has pointed out that one reason the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* has been taken seriously in the Arab world (it is on sale at the book shop of the Intercontinental Hotel in Amman) is that its thesis of a vast plot answers Arab insecurities. "If the *Protocols* are believed, then the Arab defeat would make sense," Ajami has written. "The Arabs would simply be another deceived, dominated people, and what overwhelmed them would be not a small state but a vast conspiracy."

Azmi Bishara, a Palestinian at Jerusalem's Van Leer Institute, makes a similar point. Many Arabs exaggerate Israeli power, he says, because otherwise there is no way to explain Arab defeat at their hands. It is much easier to accept loss if it is forced upon you by those with exceptionally dark and powerful means. Thus it is quite common in the Arab world to hear that the U.S. government is not simply manipulated by the Zionist lobby but is effectively run by it. Attributing superhuman abilities to one's enemies is "psychologically very satisfying," says Samir Seikaly, a Palestinian-born Lebanese who is chairman of the history department at the American University in Beirut. "These are not my failures, but a question of everyone conspiring against us."

Seikaly adds that Arab conspiracy theories are fueled by cold war stories. "I remember back in the '60s how my friends would tell me that the CIA was trying to poison Castro," he says. "I told them they were crazy. Then it turned out that was exactly what was happening.... Today, I'm less quick to dismiss any plot as wild ravings."

Competing with such theories about Israel's unchecked power are those that argue exactly the opposite. Israel is not a clandestine superpower, but a weakling state, a mere tool of the West. A widespread Arab explanation for the success of Zionism, for example, is that Europeans, unable any longer to stand the Jews among them, destroyed as many as they could during the Second World War and packed the rest off to Palestine to establish a Jewish state, which would act as a satellite of Western colonial ambitions. If the United States were to cut off aid tomorrow, these theorists will tell you, Israel would collapse. Asian and African nations buy Israeli products solely to curry favor with Washington.

What all of these far-flung and contradictory theories share, however, are their origins in the desperation and humiliation of those who spin them. In his harsh appraisal of the Arabs, *The Closed Circle*, David Pryce-Jones suggests that talk of plots will only dissipate when there is some form of democracy in the Arab world. "Absolute rule engenders conspiracy, which alone can overthrow it," he writes. "Yet absolute rule is also the final fulfillment of conspiracy, a gigantic plot of one man against everyone else. This is what keeps the power challenge ... in perpetual motion."

ETHAN BRONNER

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But if Egypt was capable of negotiating accords with Israel, those accords still fall short of genuine peace. In Egypt today, more than a decade after Camp David, anti-Israel and anti-Semitic tirades are a staple of the government-controlled media; schoolchildren still learn Middle East geography on maps that do not include Israel; and citizens who dare to visit Israel are ostracized by their fellow citizens.

The Egyptian regime, too, is threatened by strong fundamentalist forces that have recently demonstrated new militancy, mounting deadly attacks on Coptic Christians, tourists and government officials. They decry the accommodation with Israel. A fundamentalist takeover would doom the current relationship between Israel and Egypt, despite all the concessions and sacrifices Israel made to win that relationship.

Before any lasting peace can be achieved, Arab nations will have to rein in the power of militant Muslim fundamentalism and irredentist Arab nationalism, which oppose the existence of Israel and pose threats to those who would seek reconciliation. And this must be accompanied by a dramatic shift in Arab attitudes toward other ethnic and religious minorities within the Middle East. Persecution of the Kurds, Sudanese blacks, Druse and the various Christian communities in the Arab Middle East has escalated in recent decades, reflecting the increasing intolerance of the Arab Muslim majority. Israelis and others delude themselves if they think that Arab populations will accept a Jewish state in the region without having first accepted other minorities in their midst.

KENNETH LEVIN is a historian who writes frequently on the Middle East.

Mitch Kapor, Data Highway Guru.

THE NEW DEMOCRAT FROM CYBERSPACE

By Robert Wright

During the mid-1980s, when Mitch Kapor and Bill Gates were America's twin software titans, telling them apart wasn't hard. Before striking it rich, Kapor had spent time as a disc jockey, a stand-up comic, a transcendental meditation instructor and a counselor at a mental hospital (where, he liked to tell journalists, he had performed "the psychic equivalent of emptying bedpans"). Gates had gone straight from college into business, showing the single-minded drive for which he remains famous. Kapor had called his software company "Lotus"—simple, elegant, quietly reflective of his spiritual leanings. Gates, in something shy of a vast creative leap, had named his microcomputer software company "Microsoft." Gates's main product, the operating system DOS, was, like the company's name, serviceable but clunky. Kapor's smash hit, the spreadsheet Lotus 1-2-3, was stylish and user-friendly.

As the decade passed, Gates got richer and richer and Microsoft got bigger and bigger. Kapor got rich and dropped out. He left Lotus, which, he said, had gotten oppressively corporate. He would leave it for Gates to be the "empire-builder, someone who wants to build the Standard Oil of computing."

Kapor, in short, seemed the more authentic embodiment of Silicon Valley's hacker ideals: anti-corporate, nonconformist, vaguely whole-earthish, creative. With time this contrast hardened into hacker iconography. Gates was the anti-Christ, a man whose corporate stranglehold on the software industry had left it awash in ugly products. Kapor was a folk hero.

In 1990 Kapor and Grateful Dead lyricist John Perry Barlow started the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a public interest group devoted to defending the civil liberties of hackers. (Some were getting stifling attention from, for example, federal agents who didn't see the humor in entering government or corporate computers, even if just for kicks.) Kapor's place in Silicon Valley lore seemed secure.

The story has since gotten more complex. The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) has moved its main office from Cambridge to Washington and expanded its domain. In particular, it is paying great attention to Al Gore's pet project, the "data superhighway"—the nationwide fiber-optic grid that, we are told, will revolutionize research, education, entertainment and commerce. Kapor is no longer just a gadfly and defender of the oppressed, but, increasingly, a Washington Player. He is a star witness at congressional hearings and a common quote in stories about the "information infrastructure." He and EFF work closely with the chairman of the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance, Ed Markey of Massachusetts (Lotus's and Kapor's home state). And they have easy access to the

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Columnist Michael Kinsley, writing in The New Republic and The Washington Post, said: "The Heritage proposal should have great appeal to principled liberals, as well as principled conservatives."

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Clinton administration, with which, Kapor says, EFF is "in sync" philosophically.

With power comes suspicion. Kapor says: "You can find people who will go on record as saying 'EFF—that bunch of Washington sellouts.' " Indeed. In expanding from civil liberties to the ideologically complex issues of infrastructure, EFF has alienated some members and some (former) employees who feel it has lost its purity of mission. And the foundation's success in Washington has brought complaints from other groups that occupy roughly the same niche—or would occupy it, at least, if there were room. EFF is "a thousand-pound canary," says Jeff Chester of the Center for Media Education; it is perceived as *the* respectable liberal voice on the information infrastructure. And "because Ed Markey's door is always open, they have incredible influence on Capitol Hill, I think to the exclusion of other groups that are working in the public interest."

Beneath this complaint is a sense that Kapor is drifting from his cultural and ideological moorings, that the Zen-master dropout from corporate America has become a tool of corporations. EFF, originally funded by Kapor and a couple of other computer millionaires, is now underwritten mainly by companies and trade associations from just about every relevant walk of life: IBM, Apple, AT&T, MCI, Bell Atlantic, Adobe, the Newspaper Association of America, the National Cable Television Association. Even the dreaded Microsoft. Jamie Love of the Center for Study of Responsive Law, a Ralph Nader group, says, "You've got the group that's billed as the principal public interest organization in these debates being funded mostly by companies and trade associations."

The question of whose interests are served by EFF is indeed important. Though the data superhighway has been heavily hyped, its significance is, if anything, underappreciated. The visionaries are probably right to say that for decades a growing portion of human interaction will take place electronically—in "cyberspace." And the sizeable cultural and political effects of this fact will depend on the architecture of cyberspace and the laws that govern it, both of which remain up for grabs, and both of which greatly concern companies backing EFF. If Kapor has sold out, he will assuredly not go to hacker heaven.

The data superhighway is much misunderstood. For example: contrary to popular belief, it already exists. AT&T, MCI, Sprint and others have laid gobs of optical fiber from city to city, and these glass lines can handle the commonly cited superhighway services: routine teleconferencing and telecommuting; interactive multimedia education; video on demand; interactive home shopping (eventually featuring 3-D on-line catalogs); remote medical diagnosis; prompt delivery of any book or article in the world, etc. What is lacking are lots and lots of more local fiber links, which will carry signals from superhighway to the home. One reason this distinction gets muddied is that, as one congressional staffer put it, "Saying 'We must build a nationwide superhighway' sounds better than saying, 'We must build nationwide on-and-off-ramps.' "

The "we" part is also misleading. The builder of the data highways and byways won't be the government. The work will be done by cable T.V. companies, regional Bell telephone companies and other private actors. And the Clinton administration won't be footing the bill. It has promised only $1 billion annually for a project that is expected to cost between $200 billion and $400 billion over fifteen to thirty years.

The likely builders of fiber networks are seeking less direct federal support. The regional Bells want to be freed to compete with cable T.V.; then, they say, they'll have an incentive to invest heavily in local fiber networks. They wouldn't mind tax breaks or looser rate controls, either. The cable companies would like to be free of price regulation, which dampens revenues and thus slows their replacement of coaxial cable with fiber. But, having just been re-regulated, they're now talking more about tax breaks.

In Washington the sense of urgency about building a nationwide fiber network has abated a bit since the presidential campaign, when Gore carried the goal to new prominence. One reason is Mitch Kapor. On the day before Clinton's inauguration, in a standing-room-only hearing of Markey's subcommittee, Kapor championed a near-term alternative to a fully fiber network that EFF had been pushing for some time: integrated services digital network, or ISDN. By enabling existing copper phone lines to carry digital signals (on-or-off signals, instead of wavy "analog" signals), ISDN would make the lines much quicker conduits of data. Kapor's testimony inspired the lead paragraph of a story in the next day's *Washington Post*: "Plans advocated by the incoming Clinton administration and others to use fiber-optic cables to create an elaborate new nationwide communications highway may be elbowed out by less costly technologies."

This is a little misleading. Kapor supports a nationwide fiber grid, and sees ISDN as a transitional step, not a substitute. Still, he does oppose big government financing for fiber, and this financing did seem a live prospect in January, after Gore's ambitious campaign rhetoric. Gore now says he was misinterpreted and had never envisioned a big government role. In any event, the interest in ISDN stoked by EFF and Markey helped end discussion of any such role.

Arguments rage over ISDN. Some call it a distraction—a marginal and, anyway, inevitable step that will only sap public support for fiber subsidies. Others call it a waste—sure to be rendered obsolete by fiber fairly soon (though much of the investment in ISDN, such as digital switches, might survive the transition to fiber). Whatever ISDN's technical merits, one thing it definitely succeeds at is illustration. It is a nice example of EFF's ideology—of the shape Kapor thinks the eventual fiber-optic network should assume, and of the political, cultural and economic values embedded in such a net-

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work. ISDN helps explain what Kapor means when he calls EFF's worldview "Jeffersonian."

ISDN, which is already available to more than a third of Americans (unbeknownst to most of them), could reach virtually every American home in four or five years. Over existing copper lines, it moves data twenty-seven times faster than a 2400-baud modem. That would mean rapid-fire faxes and database retrievals and the easy transmission of graphics and photographs, both of which are very information-intensive. ISDN wouldn't bring seamless video, but, with the aid of new data-compression tricks, it could bring video worthy of teleconferences.

ISDN could revolutionize, say, house hunting. Sit at your terminal, define the kind of home you're after, and then "tour" each candidate: see color pictures of the house, of every room, of the view from every window. Moving from one room to the next would take a few seconds, versus a couple of minutes at 2400-baud. You wouldn't buy a house without touring the real thing, of course, but you'd remotely reject plenty of houses, saving eons of drive time. The fact that people actually watch those Sunday real estate shows—which offer about four shots of each house and no control over which houses appear—suggests a large potential market for a Home Home Shopping Service.

MITCH KAPOR BY JIM HOLLOWAY FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

ISDN would also simplify, for example, expert medical consultation for rural residents. An x-ray or CAT scan comprises vast numbers of bits, and sending one by conventional modem can take ten minutes. Telecommuting, too, would be easier. ISDN would let you remotely control your office computer with little or no bothersome time lag. And because ISDN divides the phone line into three parts, you and a colleague can talk to each other while looking at any text or images you're discussing. Less sexy services—the electronic magazines, bulletin boards and databases that are already common—would become much cheaper to run and easier to use.

In grasping ISDN's connection to EFF's core doctrines, the most important thing to appreciate is that, even when it is transporting video, ISDN is not like cable T.V. Many politicians talk as if the regional Bells and the cable companies are equally viable builders of fiber networks—whoever can do the job fast and cheap should do it. But a choice between the two could be momentous, assuming they pattern the new fiber systems on their current systems.

Suppose, for example, you want to start the Home Home Shopping Service. Sounds easy: tell people you'll sell their homes for much less than brokers charge; you'll come in, take lots of pictures and file them on a computerized database in your den. But if the pictures have to be accessed via cable-T.V. lines, you'll have a problem. Cable systems aren't generally designed to let you send data; they're designed to let you receive it. And even if the lines are made two-way, you still have to send the data through a central bottleneck to get it to other people; cable systems typically have a "tree and branch" structure, so that getting one branch in touch with another means going through the trunk. To get your Home Home Shopping Service through the trunk, you'd probably have to promise the cable company a piece of the action and do God knows what else to convince it that the operation was viable.

With ISDN, you need nobody's permission. The phone system is designed for decentralized, home-to-home communication; it is a *switched* network—not a tree, but a web in which the shortest distance between two points is a reasonably straight line. What's more, as a matter of law, the regional Bells have to make their system available to everyone at the same rate, since they are "common carriers"; they don't pass judgment on the content of your communication—it's none of their business. So long as you're on the Bell system, you can just set up the Home Home Shopping Service in your den, advertise it and wait for the calls to come in.

In championing ISDN, Kapor has been inspired (seduced, critics say) by his success at Lotus, which hinged on the open architecture of the IBM personal computer. Any software designer could take the computer's publicly available specifications, create compatible software and sell the software without anyone's permission. The result was an explosion of entrepreneurship. ISDN, similarly, would provide an "open platform" for experimentation, a seedbed for enterprise.

The ensuing proliferation of new data services, Kapor thinks, would help solve the chicken-and-egg problem that has slowed the laying of fiber by the private sector. Once the Home Home Shopping Service was a success, a better version—a high-definition T.V. tour through each house—would seem to be a sure bet. So fiber would seem to be a surer bet. Here, again, Kapor speaks from experience. The success of P.C. software—especially Lotus 1-2-3—brought massive investment in subsequent, more powerful generations of hardware.

The fiber lines that would gradually overshadow ISDN's copper lines should, says Kapor, follow the same basic form: a switched network, open to all, with no dis-

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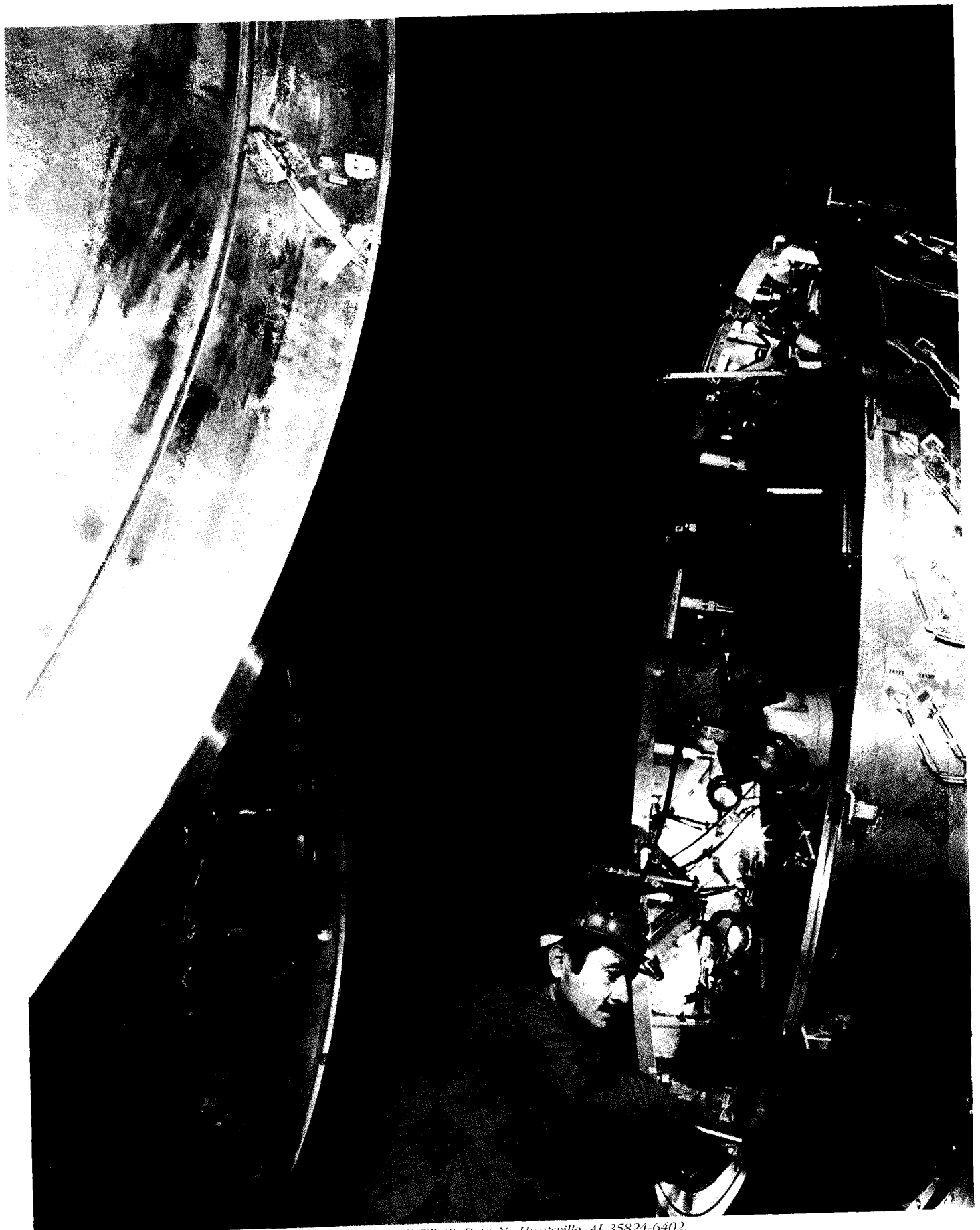

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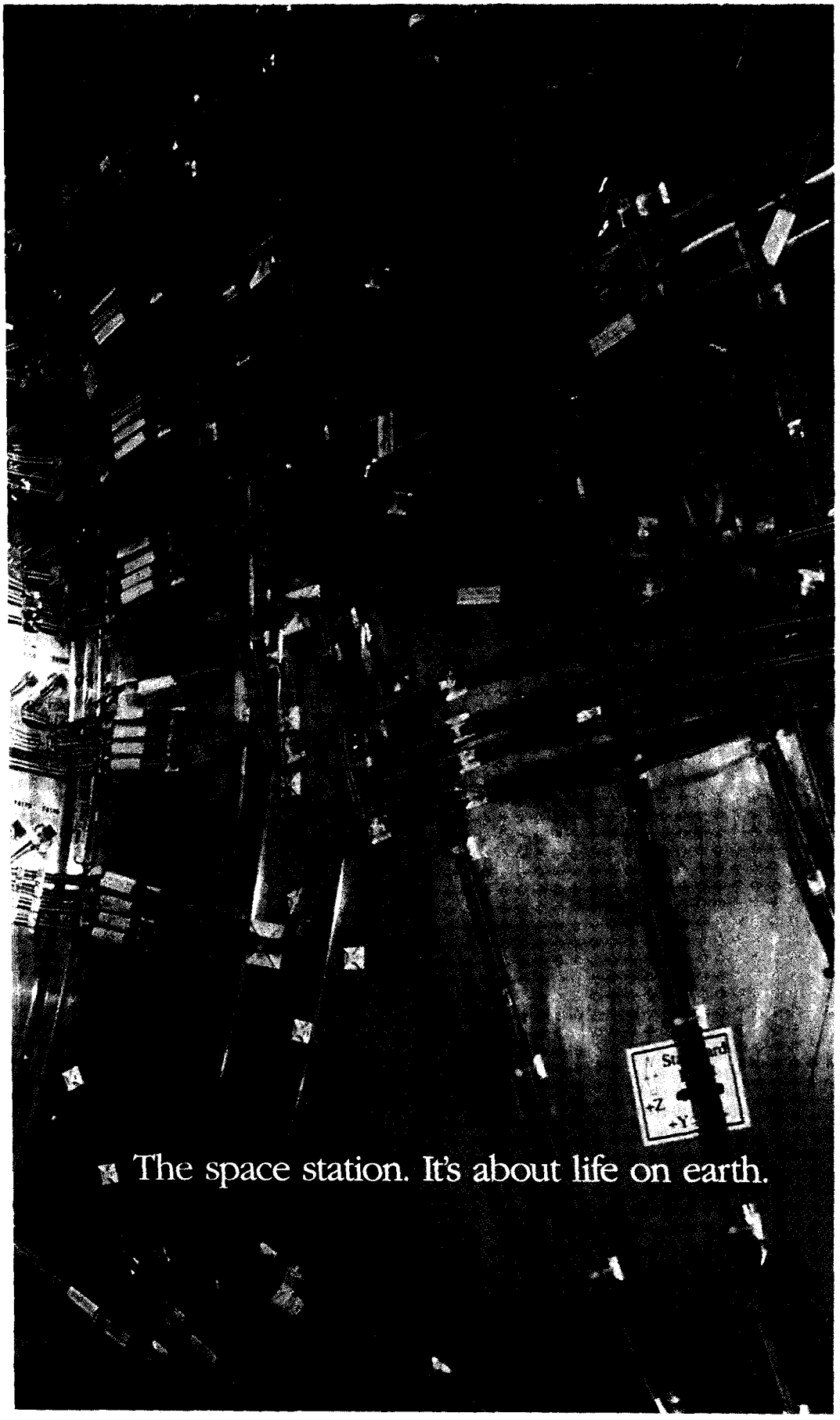

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crimination on the basis of content. The coming fiber grid should resemble the phone system, not the average cable T.V. system.

In stressing the superiority of switched, open networks, Kapor seems not especially trammeled by the money EFF gets from the National Cable Television Association. Describing how cable companies have tried to exploit the term "information infrastructure," he says, "They have all these great slides that they make up about it. They say, 'We can deliver information-age benefits, we've got our fiber-optic networks.' And they don't talk about the fact that the networks are closed—you can't put your own content on it. You know, I mean like *fatal* limitations."

To say that the new grids should resemble the phone system isn't to say that phone companies have to build them. Cable companies can build switched fiber networks. In fact, Time-Warner is building a small one in suburban Orlando. And maybe, with a radical attitude adjustment, cable companies could even adopt the mindset of a common carrier. But we certainly can't assume that companies accustomed to the somewhat Stalinist world of cable T.V. will, if left to their own devices, choose to build switched, open networks.

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For that matter, we can't assume that the regional Bells, once allowed into the T.V. business, will choose to build switched networks. The Bells' fascination with video programming tends to rest on a kind of cable envy that could foster uncritical emulation.

Whoever the various highway builders are, then, they may need some, well, *guidance*. If the government gives them their cherished incentives to lay fiber, perhaps in return it should get some say over highway architecture and the rules of the road. So far this idea hasn't permeated Capitol Hill. Last year the Bush administration's FCC issued its "video dial tone" ruling, allowing phone companies to carry video programming owned by others. Now a bill sponsored by Democratic Representative Frederick Boucher of Virginia would free the Bells to own some of the programming they carry—a major item on their wish list. Yet the Boucher bill says nothing about network architecture. And it doesn't entirely resolve questions (though it does address them) about whether the Bells' ownership of video content might conflict with the role of common carrier.

Legislation as undemanding as the Boucher bill could mean that in twenty years, after zillions of dollars are spent on fiber optics, some cities will have two centralized, corporatized T.V. systems instead of one. That wouldn't be a total loss. It might keep rates low without regulation. Also, a centralized fiber system would offer much more variety than a centralized coaxial system. Still, it probably wouldn't bring the explosion in consumer choice that Kapor hopes for.

And "consumer choice" isn't the half of it. EFF's argument for a switched, open network is much deeper than the Home Home Shopping Service example suggests. That example covers only the argument's economic dimension. The other dimensions are cultural and political.

One nightmare scenario for a data superhighway, says Kapor, is that it would take the famous Bruce Springsteen lyric and multiply it by ten: 570 channels and nothing on. "I mean, we could have tremendous bandwidth into the home and individuals and groups not have any access to it but continue to be passive recipients for whatever the people who control access to that medium want to do with it." In other words: "just more corporatism."

Surely he exaggerates. Even monopolistic cable companies don't do "whatever they want." They cater to consumer demand in a crude way, since more viewers mean more money. Still, it is true that the vision of 570 channels looks positively retro next to Kapor's vision: a network devoid of centralized control, a network on which everyone can be producer as well as consumer, and no audience is considered too small—a network that supplements popular culture not just with highbrow culture, but with *un*popular culture.

If someone wants to telecast his daughter's cello practice live, to one or ten or fifty people, then let the fun begin. And if the daughter wants to use a camcorder, computerized animation, a desktop editing system, text from the *Bhagavad Gita* and clips from *Birth of a Nation* to produce an interactive multimedia product, fine; let people download it and experience it at their leisure. If she wants to host a teleconference seminar afterward, that's fine, too. Maybe, as her following grows, she'll become a multimedia Truffaut.

And if the content of her product, and of the ensuing tele-discussion, is political (text from the *Federalist Papers* and clips from C-SPAN), *that's* fine. Maybe it will seed a new ideology; maybe she will host ever larger electronic town meetings. In the world of tomorrow, anyone can grow up to be Ross Perot—without becoming a billionaire first.

In this light, the principles EFF wants embedded in the fiber network assume new meaning. Ensuring cheap, easy and equal access becomes more than a lubricant for entrepreneurship; it is a guarantee of free cultural and political expression—the extension of the

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First Amendment into cyberspace. When Jerry Berman, formerly of the ACLU and now EFF's executive director, is asked what lobbying about the data superhighway has to do with EFF's original mission, he says information infrastructure is "the fundamental civil liberties issue of the twenty-first century."

Berman and Kapor recommend a paradigm shift. The phrase "500 channels," which often crops up in discussions of the superhighway, is best banished from future discourse. The preferred model is internet, the global computer meta-network, which encompasses various institutional archives and millions of personal computers. On internet people can read and post messages on bulletin boards; send e-mail to a friend; "broadcast" e-mail to lots of friends; search databases and download articles and software; play games by long distance; join in discussions—whether in "real time" or on bulletin boards—that become magazines in progress read by lots of people who don't contribute; and so on. Friendships blossom, clubs form, debates rage. EFF itself arose from internet discussions between Barlow and Kapor, who live half a country apart. And recent debate over EFF's corporate backing and ideological fidelity has been catalyzed by internet.

Internet involves no dominant corporate players, no central source of information, no central source of anything. It is with evident satisfaction that Kapor calls it "one of the world's largest functioning anarchies."

Internet, being hard to access and navigate, is mainly a world of computer jocks. But, says Kapor, "you've got to get past the idea that it's nerds only" and see "the beauty within its soul." Imagine a user-friendly, multimedia internet over a switched fiber-optic network: practically infinite capacity and infinite reach in a world of cheap video equipment, subtly interactive software and so on. Uses of the network would be reminiscent of various mixtures of T.V., radio, telephones, computers, magazines, mass mail, C.B. radios—a new medium of such flexibility and power that there's literally no telling what it will be like. This is the vision of the hackers. They believe that thinking of the new medium as high-octane T.V., as some legislators seem inclined to do, will only lead to bad legislation.

All in all, "Jeffersonian" is probably a defensible description of EFF's vision. And not just because the government's role would be simply to lay the groundwork for the economic, cultural and political manifestation of liberty. Jefferson believed that the basic resource of his day—land—was a "natural right," and that its acquisition by the masses should be promoted, in part to foster self-reliance. These days, land is not such a vital resource. The sine qua non of prosperity, increasingly, is information. "If you give individuals a suitably rich information environment," says Kapor, "whatever their discipline or profession is, you're empowering them economically." Access to data lets people "strike out and have an independent economic existence." And, unlike land, information is potentially infinite. Everyone can cultivate it, and everyone can share in the harvest. But only if the information infrastructure is designed with that in mind.

Putting a gigabyte in every pot sounds like a liberal enough goal. So what *are* the substantive complaints from the left about EFF? They're hard to flesh out. After mentioning shady corporate backing and complaining about EFF's hogging the spotlight, critics tend to lapse into minor or off-the-mark issues (such as "reserving channels for nonprofits," a concern that, though perhaps valid in the short run, EFF hopes to render moot). But there is one genuine and weighty difference between EFF and its liberal critics: how to get the gigabyte in every pot.

Kapor wants to do it by lowering the cost of the gigabytes. As the personal computer industry showed, "Volume goes up, price comes down. The same thing will be the case here." Just structure cyberspace so enterprise can flourish, and access to data will grow cheap, "like televisions and telephones today."

But markets don't do their magic overnight. Highway builders, left to their own devices, will put fiber in affluent neighborhoods first. And even if all homes were suddenly given broad bandwidth, each exotic new service would, for a time, be pricey. Marc Rotenberg of Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility expresses a common fear when he talks about the "network equivalents of Beverly Hills and East L.A." He and some others on the left want to address such disparities by making public schools and libraries information oases in low-income neighborhoods. He wants to "get the network out to K-12," and he worries about EFF's "lack of support for public libraries."

Kapor actually supports subsidies that will get libraries and schools linked to internet, and to the fully fiber network of tomorrow—including subsidies in a second Boucher bill that he finds more meritorious than the first. EFF has managed to avoid an open split with the American Library Association. (Few things are worse for your image than thousands of kindly librarians bad-mouthing you.) Still, tension does exist. Kapor frowns on an idea that some states are considering—building whole fiber-optic networks specially for schools and libraries before the market has lowered the cost (especially of the "boxes" that will connect user to fiber). The best way to help libraries, schools and poor people, he says, "is to get the mass market moving as quickly as possible." The question is: "What are the minimal government interventions required to ensure access? I mean, no doubt there will be some small percentage of people who need to get subsidies, just as there are for telephone service." And "we'd be prepared to hop on it as hard as necessary to ensure equity of access." It's just that "some other issues, like network architecture—like, is it going to be open, and can you put your own content on it?—are much more problematic right now."

Between Rotenberg and Kapor lies an issue that has

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helped fracture the left over the past twenty years: the relative role of markets and government in realizing liberal goals. The very language they use pinpoints them on the ideological map. Rotenberg, explaining Kapor's attraction to ISDN, says somewhat suspiciously, "Mitch saw very exciting entrepreneurial possibilities." It's "not so much that he was trying to make a buck" as that he naturally identified with business interests. (As if business interests and the public interest necessarily diverge.) Kapor, meanwhile, talks about special interests with the full-throated disdain of a New Democrat (or an old Republican). "They come and they got their hand out," he says. "And it's amazing and disgusting to me to see the parade of people sucking on the government teat. I mean it's really true. You sit in enough hearings—you know, they're nice people; they're family people; I could have interesting conversations with them. But they're conditioned and adapted to operating in an environment where the way they get resources is by *whining*. And, you know, we can't afford to do that."

Kapor avoids common labels for his outlook. "Neoliberal" is "very déclassé," he says. In fact, any variation on "liberal" (except "postliberal") bothers him, so tainted is the term by its old "programmatic" methods. But he can't dodge "New Democrat"; he's a longtime contributor to Democratic campaigns, and he sure isn't an *old* Democrat.

One possibly apt label for Kapor's ideology is "Silicon Valley"—construed broadly to include the American computer culture anywhere from northern California to Kapor's turf in Massachusetts. Among many hackers, the emphasis on free expression and moral tolerance is unyielding, and is nourished by a deep suspicion of authority. But a thoroughly left-wing aversion to government intrusion, when applied to economic matters, leads to the right end of the political spectrum (or, at least, to the "neo" end of "liberal"). Hence EFF co-founder Barlow's identity, as rendered by Kapor: "an acid-head ex-Republican-county-chairman." (And no, the Republican part didn't precede the acid part.) Though many hackers have at one time or another been on the government dole, typically through the Pentagon's research budget, there is still in Silicon Valley a large suspicion of subsidies, a strong strain of laissez-faire.

All told, Kapor has a plausible line of defense against charges of sellout: coherence. EFF seems driven by a consistent ideology (neoliberal, New Democrat, whatever); and that ideology seems a natural expression of Kapor's worldview, which in turn is rooted in his cultural milieu. His vision of the data superhighway is simply a hacker's vision. It doesn't have that jerry-built quality we expect from an agenda designed to satisfy a dozen different corporations. In fact, simultaneously satisfying the various interests backing EFF would be impossible. There are very few things they all favor.

But by the same token, fear of antagonizing them could induce paralysis. And, though paralysis doesn't yet seem a major problem (witness Kapor's opposition to the large fiber subsidies beloved by cable and the Bells), it is also true that EFF has been slow to take a formal stand on some issues, including the divisive question of the Bells' entry into video programming. This permits Love to observe suspiciously, "A blank slate is a position, when you think about it."

Such suspicions may not be well-founded, but they are not crazy, and they are unlikely to fade completely away. Which is sad. EFF came on the scene as a White Knight, beholden to no one, moved only by a few heartfelt values. This autonomy distinguished it from almost every other interest group, public or otherwise. (Even Love's patron, Nader—who coined the term "public interest group"—gets money from trial lawyers associations, which have quite a stake in the litigiousness he foments.) As long as EFF relies on corporate backing, it can never again claim that special purity. It is true that an earnest neo-Jeffersonianism (that is, Hackerism) seems to be Kapor's driving force. But it is also true that most EFF backers will in the long run profit from a neo-Jeffersonian world, in which data flows fast and free.

THOMAS JEFFERSON BY JIM HOLLOWAY FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Kapor sometimes seems overly optimistic about that world. But here, again, he is being true to hacker culture, which exudes a nearly mystical faith in the benign force of uninhibited information. Barlow often cites Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the Jesuit priest who envisioned the technological assembly of a planetary "noosphere," a global brain that would seal humanity's spiritual destiny: Point Omega. "Whether or not it represents Teilhard's vision," he has written, "it seems clear we are about some Great Work here—the physical wiring of collective human consciousness. The idea of connecting every mind to every other mind in full-duplex broadband is one which, for a hippie mystic like me, has clear theological implications."

Kapor doesn't put the matter in theological terms. Still, when you ask him about some possibly malign effects of a nationwide fiber grid, he exhibits a trust in cyberspace that verges on faith.

For instance: What about the much-feared cultural fragmentation of America—the death of Cronkite, the

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Cartwrights and other images that once formed a common American heritage? Remember, Kapor says, people are "quite social and sociable and we depend on shared meanings." So, "I think there will always be some role for vehicles of communication that serve broad markets. They may be less comprehensive and less powerful than they have been, and frankly that would be a goddamn good thing." But "this notion that we all only talk to other people that are just like ourselves is a fear that I actually don't see any rational justification for."

And what about grid-induced gridlock? Surely the new medium will, as internet has already begun to do, spawn groups bound by interests of stunning narrowness. And surely when these interests are political, their weight will be felt in Washington. If Congress is bombarded by letter-writing campaigns now, just wait until minute special interests are coalescing on-line (and often doing their letter-writing on-line). Kapor says: "I think what will happen is that all that stuff will wind up being discounted in the political process. At the point at which anybody can do it, it just won't be taken seriously."

Both of these issues—cultural disintegration and electronic gridlock—deserve deeper analysis, and in neither case would the analysis likely end on as sanguine a note as Kapor's does. These are genuinely scary problems. In fact, they are at some level the same scary problem: the more efficient sorting of people into their designated boxes, whether cultural, political or both. This is one of the darker dimensions of Teilhard de Chardin's superorganism metaphor: the ever sharper division of society into cells of ever more finely specified roles. That such divisive constraint should result from freely flowing information may sound strange, but the early signs are that this perverse correlation holds. Its ultimate test will come with an electronic grid of exactly the sort that EFF recommends.

There's no sense trying to escape the test. The alternatives seem either equally scary or just plain absurd. (A government-mandated return to broadcasting, with only three channels allowed?) America has no real choice but to dance with the guy who brung us: stick with Jeffersonian laws of information flow and address problems as they arise. In the meanwhile, we can have faith in the timelessness of the nation's founding principles. But faith is all it will be.

If there's a silver lining here, it's that national disintegration can have globally integrating effects. Americans of different class, religion, vocation or avocation may indeed have less contact with each other next century than now, but they can have more contact with similarly situated foreigners. Kapor gets gleeful standing at his computer and reading a piece of e-mail from someone in Iran who has just announced the creation of an Iranian "node" on internet. This internationalist impulse, this thrill at crossing deep chasms, is shared by many cybernauts and by genuine liberals in both the nineteenth- and twentieth-century senses of the word. And, obviously, by Teilhard de Chardin, who believed that, as national boundaries weakened under the weight of cross-cutting affinities, war would cease to be practical.

Who governs a global cyberspace? Which nation's constitution defines, or denies, your right to put a radical message on an Iranian bulletin board? "A lot of stuff that we've done has been very United States focused," Kapor says. "And that's a shortcoming, because you have to think globally." EFF has looked into cyberspace questions of an international cast, and "we can see an agenda of issues that we could grow into over the next several years quite comfortably if we had the resources and so on." (Hmmmm. The Standard Oil of public interest groups?)

Kapor is approaching his three-year anniversary as a presence in Washington. And "you know, I don't find it very hard to take, which surprises me." Surprises a lot of people. More than one critic has noted the irony of his having left corporate America with conspicuous disdain for its ethos and then having shifted his focus to Washington. Might as well move from Sodom to Gomorrah.

No, there's a difference, he insists. "The difference is that in business, because you're legally obligated to protect shareholder interests, and because there's a whole culture that virtually demanded disingenuousness and manipulation, it just became increasingly difficult for me, given who I am and what I believe, to feel like I could get up in the morning and do my job without feeling slimy, whereas at least so far, in three years, I haven't had that problem. I don't mind it being in the environment. I mean environments are environments. I'm a pragmatist. They are the way they are. And sort of holding your nose up in the air and saying, 'This isn't up to my standards' is a pretty foolish posture."

The Electronic Frontier Foundation advised the Clinton transition team, and at one point there was discussion of an administration job for Kapor. The job was "nothing incredibly glamorous." Still, "it got serious enough that I had to think about, well, would I actually want to live in Washington?" Pause. "No way."

Wise move. If there's one thing Washington doesn't need it's another formerly well-meaning apparatchik. And if there's one thing it does need, it's someone who will persist in the nearly impossible task of trying to keep the town focused on the big picture. So far Kapor and EFF have done more than anyone to clarify the deeper data-superhighway issues—more than Al Gore, and more than John Sculley, the administration's high-tech mascot. And in addressing the less deep issues—how do you pay for the thing?—Kapor exhibits a truer sense for the uses of markets than is yet evident within the Clinton administration generally. All in all, he's a model New Democrat. There's always room for a good New Democrat in Washington, but right now there's more room in cyberspace. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Females of the Species

Several of Ingmar Bergman's actors have tried their hands at directing. Some years ago Ingrid Thulin did two films, and in 1988 Max von Sydow did one. I saw two of the three and was more interested than overwhelmed. Now Liv Ullmann has directed **Sofie** (Arrow), which is the unoverwhelming best of this small Bergman-family genre.

Sofie, made in Denmark, was adapted from a Danish novel, *Mendel Philipsen & Son* by Henri Nathanson. Few of us will hear it, but one of the characters is teased because he speaks Danish with a Swedish accent. And *Sofie* was directed by Ullmann, who is Norwegian but has played mostly in Swedish. There must have been a lot of teasing off-camera, too. To us, Scandinavia may be one big northern-lights whole: not to the people who live there.

Set in the late nineteenth century, this two-and-a-half-hour film reflects Ullmann's well-known humane concerns. It deals with two social inequalities: the treatment of women and of Jews. Sofie is Jewish; and without forgetting Denmark's heroic behavior in World War II, her story is discomfiting to those who have made grand assumptions about Denmark and Jews. This is certainly not an account of oppression, but it has a strain of difference in status running through it.

I don't know Nathanson's novel, but I assume it's a long one, the kind of crunch-along chronicle whose power comes less from drama than from length. With such a book the author's chief job is to keep us turning the pages just because there are so many of them. He has to make us feel stamina, courage, in persisting. If he succeeds, then the hours spent with the book crown its effect: those hours symbolize the years that the characters spent in living the story. We feel companionately triumphant.

This is tough to accomplish in films, which obviously can't ask for as much time from an audience as novels do from readers. (Fassbinder's towering *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, taken from Döblin, is an exception that mightily proves the rule.) August's *Pelle the Conqueror*, which dealt with only the first part of Nexø's giant novel, gripped because its year-by-year chronicle generated giant forces. *Sofie* tells a story of much smaller scale—one episode after another, with little underground swell—and we miss the tiny satisfaction of page-turning.

We see Sofie first at 29, in 1886, the daughter of Copenhagen haute bourgeoisie, unmarried and increasingly aware of it. She almost has an affair with a Byronic painter but flees at the crucial moment both because of conventional morality and because he is gentile. She marries a docile provincial shopkeeper, has a son and almost has an affair with her brother-in-law. (Emma Bovary is faintly hinted at.) Widowed, she returns to Copenhagen, takes over her father's business and, at the end, sees her grown son leave centripetal Jewish life in quest of assimilation.

This last development is hardly the theme of the film: nothing is. Nor is the story, as such, engrossing. We couldn't predict it in detail, but we seem to recognize it as it moves along. In spite of all this, the picture might have had some textural warmth if the people in it developed through the years. Sofie is the only one who changes, and not in any moving way. Everyone else is stamped at the outset with a character-tic and continues throughout unchanged. "Here comes old Tante Pulle," we think every time she reappears, "the one who takes care of pet birds." And so on.

Ullmann wrote the screenplay with Peter Poulsen, an experienced producer. Their combined experience hasn't done much more than give them a technically filmable script. What is even more disappointing is Ullmann's work with her actors. The one small exception is Karen-Lyse Mynster, who is Sofie. We know at the start that Mynster is not 29, but this is so obviously true that we admire her courage. She has a kind of prickly appeal. With nothing like enchantment, she still persuades us of the uniqueness that others see in her. But none of her peak moments, of passion or despair, is as well realized as Ullmann might have helped her to reach.

The two actors best-known here are Ghita Nørby and Erland Josephson, Sofie's parents. Nørby, so fine as Bergman's grandmother in *The Best Intentions*, comes as close to doing nothing as is possible for a talented person. Josephson, long wonderfully familiar

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Much Ado About Nothing. *Kenneth Branagh shows again, after* Henry V, *that he is a master of Shakespeare on film. The four Americans in the cast don't help, but he and the magnificent Emma Thompson revel with an otherwise glittering troupe. (Reviewed 5/10/93)* **The Story of Qiu Ju.** *A wife's persistence in righting an injury done her husband is the mainspring of this very pleasant comedy about rural China today. Gong Li captivates as the wife. Zhang Yimou directs subtly. (5/17/93)* **Stolen Children.** *An 11-year-old girl who has been prostituted by her mother is taken from Milan, with her younger brother, to a home in Sicily. A young policeman escorts them. Emotionally reticent, yet emotionally strong. (3/22/93)* **The Night We Never Met.** *If you have nothing better to do. Amusing fluff about a mix-up of three tenants in a Greenwich Village apartment. (5/17/93)* **—SK**

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from Bergman's films, is just the opposite as Sofie's father. He misses no chance for the extra pat, the extra chuckle, the extra sigh, overloading all the way. Where was Ullmann?

By far the most distinguished work in *Sofie* was done by Jørgen Persson, the cinematographer, who did *Pelle the Conqueror* and *The Best Intentions* (and, years ago, *Elvira Madigan*). He has a great feeling for period material, without nostalgia. He understands that rooms and the world looked different in the past, but he manages to convey this through the eyes, so to speak, of the characters. We feel that the scenic tristesse or gaiety or relish of detail is the way the people in the film viewed matters.

Ullmann reflects her Bergman past in at least two moments: the ticking of the clock in the opening sequence, *echt* Bergman, and the later use of a Bach passage. It's the same music that Bergman used for a wonderful scene in *Persona* with Ullmann herself. *Sofie* has no hint at all of individual directing flavor. It could have been made by any moderately competent person who had Persson.

Apposite Book Note. Reel Women: Pioneers of the Cinema 1896 to the Present by Ally Acker (Continuum, 374 pp., $18.95 paper) has just appeared. It's coarsely written. It's intellectually flabby. It's inadequately copyedited. It has no consistent method: sometimes its entries have birth and death dates, sometimes not; some entries contain biographical background, some do not; some entries for exceptional people are short, some for lesser people run on.

Acker's book often tempted me to put it down. But I kept reading, because much of the material is not in other books about women in film and because Acker looks at professions other than directing: women writers, producers, cinematographers, designers, even stunt women.

Her aim was to correct the impression that women have contributed little to the American film world. (She has a section on foreign film women, but it's skimpy and ought to have been omitted. This field is better covered in *Women in Film*, edited by Annette Kuhn with Susannah Radstone, 1990.) She includes women of color, who are adding an important body of work to the story.

Acker's book is analogous to Kevin Brownlow's *Behind the Mask of Innocence*, 1990. Brownlow is a much better writer and thinker, but his intent was, like Acker's, to go over seemingly familiar ground and show that our assumptions were faulty. His topic was the grittier pictures in the supposedly prim period of silent film. Acker does the same upsetting of assumptions about a male-dominated field. It certainly was, still is, male-dominated: but there were many, many women who mattered—in all the film professions. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

Angles in America

Tony Kushner's **Angels in America**—or rather the first of its two parts, *Millennium Approaches*—may very well be the most highly publicized play in American theater history. It is certainly one of the most peripatetic. Originally planned for a 1989 opening at San Francisco's Eureka Theater, then performed in full workshop at the Mark Taper in Los Angeles, later produced by the Eureka Theater in 1990, still later by the Royal National Theatre in London in early 1992, then staged along with its second part by the Mark Taper in Los Angeles in late 1992, and now mounted on Broadway after bypassing one of its scheduled sponsors (the New York Public Theater), *Angels in America* has received unanimous praise at every step in its journey.

Meanwhile its author, and latterly its Broadway director, George C. Wolfe, have been inspiring feature stories in countless newspapers and magazines. Awarded a Pulitzer Prize before it even opened in New York, the play will doubtless win multiple Tonys, the Critics Circle Prize, next year's Outer Circle Award and any other honors still being stamped by theatrical trophy factories. A hungry media machine collaborating with a desperate industry has turned the second dramatic effort of a relatively young playwright into that illusory American artifact, The Great American Play.

In short, *Angels in America* is being regarded less as a work of the imagination than as a repository of high cultural hopes and great economic expectations. And burdened with such heavy baggage, it virtually invites close scrutiny at the customs desk, which is to say, a classic critical debunking. This will surely come, but don't expect it from me. I have a few reservations about the script and more about the New York production. But for all the hype and ballyhoo, and granted that one is judging an unfinished work, I would rather join in welcoming the authoritative achievement of a radical dramatic artist with a fresh, clear voice.

Indeed, the real question is how such a dark and vaguely subversive play could win such wide critical acceptance. (Wide audience acceptance is not quite as likely.) Compare how long it took Mamet to find success on Broadway, and consider how many gifted writers such as Sam Shepard, David Rabe, Maria Irene Fornes, Christopher Durang, Wallace Shawn and Craig Lucas, among others, have still not achieved majority status.

As noted, Kushner's new play satisfies special extra-dramatic needs. More intrinsic appeals are suggested in the subtitle, "A Gay Fantasia on National Themes." *Angels in America* is, first and foremost, a work about the gay community in the Age of AIDS—an urgent and timely subject fashionable enough off-Broadway, now ripe for the mainstream. It is also a "national" (that is, political) play in the way it links the macho sexual attitudes of redneck homophobes in the '80s with those of red-baiting bullies in the '50s. It is a "fantasia" not only in its hallucinated, dreamlike style but in the size and scope of its ambitions. (O'Neill, among others, has accustomed us to associate greatness with epic length and formal experimentation.) And it is a very personal play that distributes blame and responsibility as generously among its sympathetic gay characters as among its villains.

In short, despite its subject matter, *Angels in America* is not just another contestant in the Theater of Guilt sweepstakes. Compare it with any recent entry on the same subject and you will see how skillfully Kushner navigates between, say, the shrill accusations of Larry Kramer's *The Destiny of Me* and the soggy affirmations of William Finn's *Falsettos*. It is Kushner's balanced historical sense that helps him avoid both self-righteousness and sentimentality. His balanced style helps as well—angry but forgiving, tough-minded but warmhearted, ironic but passionate, mischievous and fantastical. Kushner is that rare American thing, an artist-intellectual, not only witty himself but the gauge by which we judge the witlessness of others. His very literate play once again makes American drama readable literature.

Kushner takes his title from one of his more memorable lines, "There are no

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angels in America, no spiritual past, no racial past." But if our country offers few figures of saintly virtue to satisfy our hopes for history, the author provides plenty of hallucinations, dreams, apparitions, ancestral ghosts. There is even a mute tutelary deity, garbed like a figure in a grammar-school pageant, who comes crashing through the ceiling at the conclusion of the play, to the sound of beating wings. (Sam Shepard's unfinished *War in Heaven* is about another angel who crashes onto an American landscape.)

While they are no angels, most of Kushner's characters have their positive side. What he wishes to celebrate is the joy and courage with which they explore their sexuality in a dangerous world. His main subject is how people display, discover and affirm the fact that they are gay. (Only one of his major characters isn't homosexual and she's having a nervous breakdown.) But despite Kushner's sense that America is essentially a queer nation in every sense of the phrase, his dramatis personae are a fairly representative grouping of contemporary American types: Joseph Pitt, a Mormon lawyer; Harper, his Valium-addicted wife; Louis Ironson, a Jewish computer technician; Prior Walter, his Brahmin lover now dying of AIDS; Belize, a former transvestite now turned male nurse—and Roy Cohn.

The presence of this malignant conservative icon heightens the political dimension of the play. As Joe McCarthy's former henchman, Cohn proudly assumes credit for the execution of Ethel Rosenberg (a phantom who appears near the end). But although he identifies homosexuality with subversion, he suffers from Karposi's sarcoma himself. Cohn stubbornly refuses to admit he is gay ("Roy Cohn is not a homosexual. Roy Cohn is a heterosexual man ... who fucks around with guys"), mainly because gays have no political power. But it is another sign of Kushner's achievement that he is almost able to make this monster appealing (the warm-hearted, totally confused Joe Pitt even expresses love for him). Roy Cohn is a classical dramatic villain who remains the play's most fascinating figure, a feat worthy of Racine, who, tradition tells us, wrote his *Phédre* in order to prove he could make an audience sympathize with a criminal character.

Alternating between intellectual debates and feverish dreams, *Angels in America* lacks an animating event or action, which is a major structural flaw in such a long (three-and-a-half-hour) work. The compensation is a gallery of wonderful characters, thirty in all, played by eight actors. The pivotal figures are Cohn and Prior, two men dying of AIDS, with two other men, the married Mormon Joseph Pitt, discovering his own sexuality, and Louis, discovering his own cowardice, revolving around these contrasting poles in various attitudes of guilt and sympathy. Louis abandons Prior when his disease reaches an advanced stage, though he seeks a pickup in Central Park in punitive disregard for his own physical health. And it is Louis, deploring the marginality of gays, who reflects on the difficulty of love in a country on the edge of a serious nervous breakdown. ("In the new century, I think we will all be insane.")

This ominous premonition regarding the new century, the expectation of divine retribution, sends shivers through this play. The sense of fatality is Greek but the prediction belongs to Ibsen, who believed that "all mankind is on the wrong track" and that the ghosts of the past and the future would retaliate for all our failed ideas and broken promises. As the ghost of Ethel Rosenberg says to the dying Cohn, "History is about to break wide open. Millennium approaches." *Angels in America* foreshadows these future schisms in the form of radical and sexual strife, the failures of liberalism, the absence of a genuine indigenous culture—and at the same time, curiously, manages to offer a trace of redemption. One redemptive feature, certainly, is a strong-voiced, clear-eyed dramatic artist capable of encapsulating our national nightmares into universal art.

The good news is the play. The not so good news is the New York production. In his notes, Kushner wrote that "the play benefits from a pared-down style of presentation, with minimal scenery," though he wanted the magical effects to be "amazing." But at $65 for an orchestra ticket, it was inevitable that the physical production would be lavish. Robin Wagner's setting is made up of cold blue marbelized panels that seem appropriate only when one of the characters lands up in Antarctica. Usually the design chills an otherwise warm-blooded work. More disconcerting is the designer's literalism in displaying a New York skyline outside Roy Cohn's window and the canyons of Utah for a brief (cuttable) scene about a character moving from Salt Lake City, even glaciers and ice flows in a South Pole fantasy. And far from being amazing, the special effects could use advice from Industrial Light and Magic.

I saw the production some days before its postponed opening, and it has undoubtedly improved, but I wasn't certain that George C. Wolfe, though extraordinarily gifted as a showman, possessed the temperament to realize such a subtle play. The evening contained a few touching scenes (particularly Louis dancing with the stricken Prior at the end), but the staging often seemed more appropriate to musical comedy than to serious drama. (Two scenes played simultaneously among four characters reminded me of the Jets and Sharks chorus in *West Side Story*.)

And much of the acting lacked depth. Admittedly, the gay characters are highly theatrical (they make continuous references to Broadway shows), but if they don't possess a solid core of truthfulness, then it is hard to identify their humanity. I much admired Joe Mantello as the suffering ironist Louis Ironson, Stephen Spinella as the cadaverous Prior Walter and Ellen McLaughlin in a number of doubled roles, all from the original California cast. But many of the major characters are either too bland or too heightened to be believable. Suspended between show business and domestic business, the production lacks command, which is a shame because this is a play that requires a director as authoritative, and actors as intelligent, as the author.

As for Ron Leibman's Roy Cohn, it is clearly over the top. Leibman, who has the mouth and teeth of a barracuda and a nasalized vocal instrument that sounds like Jerry Lewis blowing a klaxon, plays the part as a Dickensian monster, shouting, screaming, barking, stabbing his finger and slapping his thighs. He's so apoplectic you fear for his health, but he carries you along by the sheer force of his personality. I couldn't help admiring his outrageous audacity, and I also liked the Restoration fop he played in one of Prior's hallucinations. (Leibman would be terrific as the brutal Manly in Wycherly's *Plain-dealer*.)

For me the central concern is not the quality of this production (there will be many more in the future), but rather how its talented author will cope with all our deadly critical embraces and still continue his creative development. To be frank, the signs thus far are not exactly promising. The moment commercial interest surfaced for *Angels in America*, there were enough personal betrayals, expedient decisions, fractured loyalties and postponed promises to confirm the playwright's conviction that there are no angels in America—only angles. The Broadway producers, risking millions on a problematic venture, are of course expected to protect their investments. But very few of the creative people involved acted with much honor in this undertaking, not the director who broke his commitment to another theater in order to take the assignment, nor the author who agreed to drop his original designer, members of the original cast and the original director (also

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his close friend) after *The New York Times* signaled some displeasure with the L.A. production. The decision to bypass the Public Theater may even have hastened JoAnne Akalaitis's departure.

Perhaps to compensate for all the shattered friendships and broken agreements, Kushner has insisted that Wednesday matinee tickets be sold at cheap prices (thus passing the moral debt to his producers in the form of reduced revenue). But one suspects that for all his professed loyalty to nonprofit theaters and "downtown audiences," he is rationalizing for the sake of a Broadway splash. We have had enough theater history (notably, Tennessee Williams's career after *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, when he reluctantly allowed Kazan to soften the ending) to tell us that personal deception is not compatible with artistic development. Still, I have enough faith in Kushner's intelligence and self-knowledge (after all, he created Louis Ironson) to believe he won't deceive himself long, and may even turn this experience to creative advantage. The great theatrical subject, which O'Neill pursued all his life and only captured when he created James Tyrone, is how the bitch goddess success blights the life of the American artist. Who is presently learning more about this theme—and is more qualified to write about it—than the author of *Angels in America*? •

What Remains, Alas

BY STANISLAW BARANCZAK

What Remains and Other Stories
by Christa Wolf
translated by Heike Schwarzbauer and Rick Takvorian

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 295 pp., $25)

The Author's Dimension: Selected Essays
by Christa Wolf
edited by Alexander Stephan, translated by Jan van Heurck

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 336 pp., $27.50)

"CHRISTA WOLF," an entry in an updated 1993 edition of some International Who's Who might read:

> is a former East German dissident writer who, like numerous other German writers of this century before her, lives in exile. There are three minor differences. First, her exile is "self-imposed." Second, she did not flee from a totalitarian Germany, either Hitler's Third Reich or Honecker's GDR, but left her country only after life became unbearable there, that is to say, after Germany became united and capitalist. Third, her refuge is Santa Monica, California; and her stay there is sponsored by that legendary supporter of anti-capitalist struggle, the Getty Foundation. There is also another difference. Thomas Mann or Lion Feuchtwanger were never informers for the German secret police.

A critic's cheap shot? Actually, more like an echo of the author shooting herself in the foot. In the prolonged controversy that has raged around Wolf for about three years now, she has chosen to defend herself by adopting the posture of a martyr. The controversy began with the original publication of her autobiographical narrative "What Remains"; and it grew in intensity after the public learned that for three years, between 1959 and 1962, as an already established literary critic and editor in Berlin and Halle, Wolf served as a *Geheimer Informator*, or secret informer, and an *Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter*, or unofficial collaborator, for the Stasi.

In its first, relatively innocuous stage, the controversy concerned a matter that might seem trifling now: the awkward timing of the memoir's publication. Written in June and July of 1979 and then revised around the time that the Berlin Wall was being torn down, this essentially nonfiction account of Wolf's daily harassment by the secret police—they ostentatiously followed her in cars, tapped her phone, filled seats at her public appearances—saw the light of day only in 1990. An opportune moment, you might have thought, to join in the anti-Communist clamor; but the timing prompted a reappraisal of Wolf's image, carefully cultivated by her, as a persecuted dissident.

The inevitable question of why it had taken the author so long to reveal her part of the truth about life in the GDR led to a more general questioning of the validity of her earlier "dissent." She knew, at least since 1979, that she lived in a brutal police state. What accounted for the mildly reformist but essentially pro-GDR attitude that she had taken over the previous few decades? True, she once protested against the expulsion of the singer Wolf Biermann, and she refused to sign a collective open letter praising the brotherly help given to Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact armies. These two undeniably courageous gestures, though rather exceptional for her (somehow no protest on her part was ever recorded when yet another compatriot was gunned down by the GDR border guards or jailed for political reasons), made her enough of a "dissident" in the eyes of sympathetic Western observers to gain her, two years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the prestigious Geschwister Scholl Prize, named to commemorate a pair of martyrs of anti-Nazi resistance. She accepted the prize.

Soon afterward, in September 1989, the dissident group Neues Forum asked Wolf to join its ranks, and she refused. (She did so, by the way, for a specific reason: Neues Forum's charter did not include the word "*Sozialismus.*") She was, in short, a special kind of martyr, who accepted prizes but not risks. She never renounced her membership in the Communist Party, never published anything openly critical of the GDR in the West and regularly took pains abroad (where she was allowed to travel) to extol, as the East European absurdist saying has it, "the superiority of the Easter holiday over the Christmas holiday," that is, the advantages of socialism over capitalism.

Could she really have been naive enough to believe all these forty years that the murderous system could be given a human face, or was she a lifelong opportunist? The reason that the belated appearance of "What Remains" brought Wolf such bad publicity lay, to an even greater extent, in the atmosphere of the historic moment. Early in 1990 no German reader of her story could avoid setting Wolf's self-pitying account of a prominent intellectual's tribulations against the truly horrifying panorama of totalitarian oppression that was emerging from newly unearthed and widely publicized evidence. All the persecution that she allegedly had suffered seemed ludicrous compared with what

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had by then become known about Communist methods of enforcing *Ordnung* in society.

To be sure, no writer must be a hero, much less a martyr, to be a decent writer. But for any writer, the unwritten rule of decency is: do not flaunt your own sufferings when almost everybody around you has suffered more. You were openly followed, which can ruin a citizen's day; but you were never roughed up by unknown thugs, were you? Your phone was bugged and your mail opened, a real nuisance; but you were never blackmailed, denied education or employment, arrested on trumped-up charges, thrown into jail for reading the wrong books or shot dead for wishing to live on the wrong side of the state border. The Stasi thugs were in the audiences at your readings, which was a real shame, but you were still permitted to publish books and to meet your readers in public forums, right?

Of course, flaunting one's own sufferings in a work of art may reveal personal tactlessness or egocentrism, but it does not necessarily disqualify one as an artist. Wolf's description of a writer's daily routine unraveling due to the interference of relatively mild forms of harassment may even be considered psychologically insightful, precisely because nothing really dramatic or brutal happened. We learn how little it takes to shake the foundations of one's existence, which may be what remains of "What Remains" in the reader's mind. Still, Wolf dug this narrative out of her bottom drawer in part to claim that she, too, should be counted among the victims of totalitarianism; and this was, at best, a sign of insensitivity toward those who had been truly victimized.

A more favorably inclined critic would probably replace "insensitivity" with "innocence." As divisive tactics go, the wall of privilege (even such paltry privilege as the GDR could afford to grant its state writers) was no less efficient than the Berlin Wall itself. And Wolf, despite her overblown image in the West as the GDR's leading "dissident," was a *Staatsdichterin* from start to finish, from her early years when the *Neues Deutschland* called her a "Child of the GDR" up to the more recent period when being shadowed by a Wartburg-driving army of plainclothesmen was itself a perverse symbol of the claims that the state laid upon her.

But could it be that even this writer—hailed by Western critics since the publication of *Divided Heaven* in 1963 and especially *The Quest for Christa T.* in 1968 for her focus on the individual and her attention to realistic detail—was shielded by her prominence from her nation's real life? Was she cut off from experiences that were routine for other people, therefore unaware of many things going on in her homeland? But even if that was the case, didn't her privileged status give her easy access to revelations about her country in the Western media? In sum: Could it be that Wolf never talked to people in the street at home and never read a newspaper abroad?

Implausible as it sounds, I couldn't help entertaining that remote possibility while reading "Self-Experiment," a quasi-sci-fi short story included in *What Remains and Other Stories.* Written in 1972, it is a laboriously jocular fantasy (the improbable and the grotesque emphasized to the point of overkill, no doubt in order to assure the censor that no serious political denunciation is intended) about a female research worker who agrees to serve as an object of the experiment she herself helped design, namely, to have her sex chemically altered.

"Bepeter Masculinum 199," one of the first paragraphs opens, "is a wonderful drug suited to change a woman into a man with no risk or undesirable side effects." Now this sentence, as well as the rest of the story, could have been written with a clear conscience by an East German woman writer *only* if she had no idea whatsoever that "wonderful drugs" that changed "a woman into a man," or, to be precise, that stuffed female children with male hormones, were real inventions, and that they were used in her homeland on a systematic basis in special athletic schools, and were partly responsible for the GDR's Olympic successes.

CHRISTA WOLF BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Ironically, the story's plot could not possibly be a deliberate allusion to the real-life state of affairs, because it mentions the issue in such a direct way. The reader is intuitively sure that Wolf—as a woman, a mother, or a decent human being—would have never dared to spin her serene fantasy on sex alterations if she had the foggiest notion of the real-life analogue. But then, how on earth could she have been so completely ignorant? Even in a police state, rumors make the rounds. Even in a closed society such as East Germany, West German television could be seen. Did she never hear or see any of it? Perhaps she did, but preferred to dismiss broadcasts from the Western side of the wall as rumors or propaganda, suppressing the disturbing truth not only in her writing but in her consciousness as well.

Oops, I have just used the word "truth," as if I didn't know that a Socialist Realist writer is, by definition, a modern Pilate. To the readers' simple-minded demand "A true account, please," he or she has always a more philosophically profound response: "*Quid est veritas?*"

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And "what is the truth?" is the exact wording of the rhetorical question that Wolf asks on one of the first pages of her essay collection. "What is the truth? And what is the truth of art—its statistical truth, its sociological truth, its truth as a tool of political agitation?"

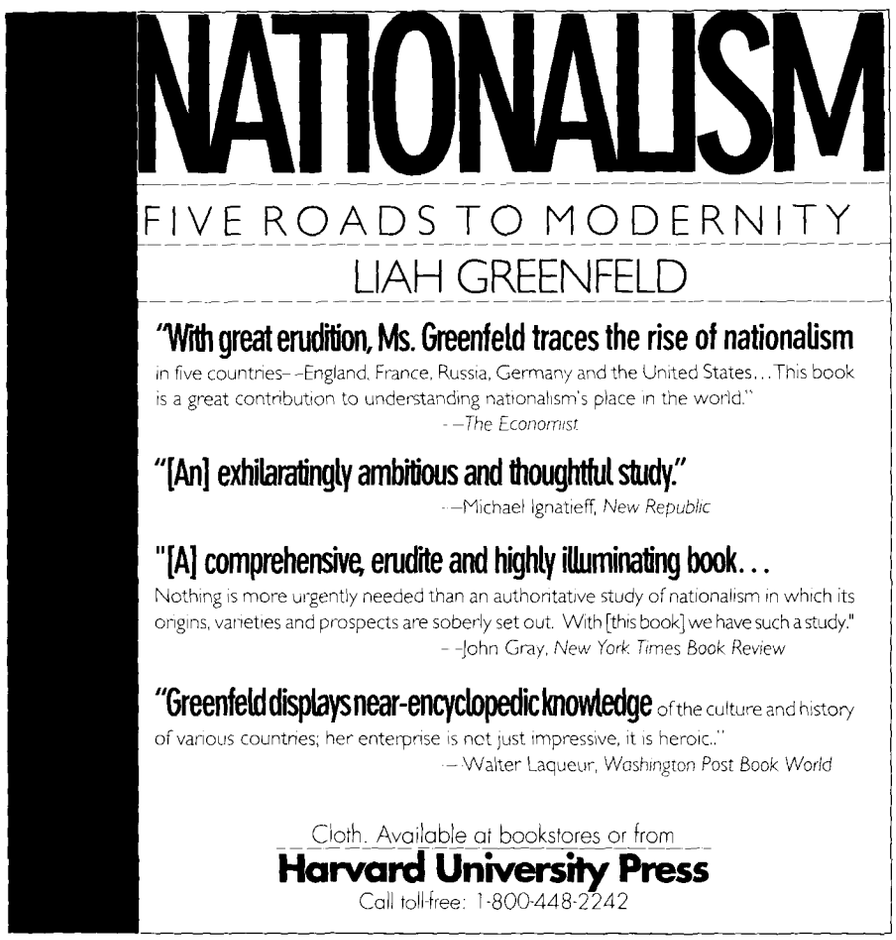
It seems very telling that only those sorts of truth come to her mind as worthy of the artist's attention. Wolf was, I dare say she still is, a Socialist Realist writer, whatever you may say about her somber picture of reality in *The Quest for Christa T.*, or of her attempts at formal experimentation in her later stories such as "Unter den Linden," "The New Life and Opinions of a Tomcat," "A Little Outing to H." or the aforementioned "Self-Experiment." Calling her a writer who breaks the Socialist Realist mold is the same kind of misjudgment as calling her a "dissident." Just as she seems rebellious against the background of the average East German citizen's standards of political behavior, she also seems innovative compared to Party classics of the Hermann Kant variety.

Wolf was frequently credited with opposing the political system of the GDR, but in fact she was that system's quintessential revisionist reformer. (On paper, needless to say.) Her position is best exemplified by her early short story, "Tuesday, September 27th," a story apparently not disowned by her, since she has included it in the present collection (without any date at the bottom, which would at least indicate that she is unearthing this archaeological object as evidence of her growth). Much like "What Remains," written at least two decades later, this is a record of one day in the life of a Communist writer. No shadowing by the police, of course; the state's omnipresence takes a more benevolent shape here, and does not get on the writer's nerves. In fact, she seems quite happy when, among the chores that constitute her daily routine, she has to go to an afternoon "Party group meeting of the brigade at the freight-car works."

Despite the author's intended seriousness, the description of the meeting reads like a slapstick parody. The participating workers "arrive in their work clothes, unwashed," but their romantically toil-stained hands clutch copies of the collected works of Lenin, from which they quote at length. Their prolonged debate, concerning—what else?—the increase of work productivity, abounds in operatic confrontations and life-and-death questions such as: "Are you a Communist or an egotist?" The most amazing thing is that the narrative betrays not a shred of doubt on Wolf's part about the purposefulness of her presence at this gathering, even though she apparently knows as little about freight-car production as the next East German writer. Even more amazing, the workers accept the creative intellectual in their midst with the greatest of ease.

At this point, unprogrammed thoughts start running through the reader's mind. What did the writer do to fit in, to earn the workers' trust? Did she too come to the meetings unwashed? As it turns out, the description of the meeting is needed as proof of the rather obvious fact that human reality is more complicated than Socialist Realist writers are allowed to admit. A genuine writer, Wolf proclaims in an interlude of soul-searching, should feel free to try to enter "into this almost impenetrable maze of motives and countermotives, actions and counteractions ... To enlarge the lives of people who seem to be condemned to taking small steps...." These two sentences sound incredibly bold for an East German author; the orthodox Party writer would never acknowledge the existence of any "countermotives" or "counteractions" in the first place. Yet we must not lose sight of the fact that they contain nothing but the essence of Socialist Realism. "Lives of people" should be faithfully portrayed, but fidelity becomes strangely identified with "enlargement"; we hear first that the world is supposed to be shown *as it is*, but from one sentence to another the *as it is* turns imperceptibly into *as it should be.*

The first in a long row of Wolf's theoretical statements that can serve as illustrations of the same abuse of logic is her speech "Contribution to the Second Bitterfeld Conference," with which she chose to open her new collection of essays. This is a curious choice, since the text is utterly banal. Any student of the Stalinist period in any East European literature could quote dozens of almost identical conference speeches or programmatic articles written by various authors during the early '50s. After the obligatory homage to the wise leadership of our beloved Party, there comes an equally ritualistic confession of faith in the doctrine of Socialist Realism and its fundamental principle of typicality, followed at last by a predictable manifestation of the writer's "constructive criticism": typicality is wonderful, sure enough, but let us do our best to make it less boring: let us admit, comrades, that even a positive hero may have some individual traits!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Wolf makes her case by quoting an example of a worker who, despite all his merits, proved unfit, in the eyes of the controllers of ideological purity, to serve as the model hero of socialist labor in some journalistic propaganda piece. Why? Because he was atypical: his wife divorced him and his son got arrested for an attempted escape to the West. Wolf pleads, in all seriousness again, to forgive the poor man for having such an unruly family, and to make him a newspaper idol anyhow. By no means does she question the very need for feeding the readers such propaganda trash (not to mention the need for arresting people who try to escape). Thus she does not so much challenge Socialist Realist doctrine as propose to give its literary disciples a little more room to maneuver within it. "A writer ... has to accept a little risk," she suggests, adding hastily, "tempered by responsibility."

Obviously, the Second Bitterfeld Conference, an official GDR event whose purpose was chiefly to rubber-stamp the artists' and the writers' unanimous approval of anything that the Communist Party declared their sacred duty, was not the ideal place for Wolf, or anybody else, to stand up and yell: People, have we all gone crazy? In the GDR, Wolf's defenders could claim, it was enough of an achievement to humanize the doctrine ever so slightly, if ridiculing it was out of the question. We can understand that. What is incomprehensible, however, is the date beneath Wolf's text. Her timid call for improvement was uttered not, as we might assume, in the years of rampant Stalinism, in the early 1950s, or in 1954 at the latest. Its date is 1964.

1964! Eight years after the cultural "thaw" in most of the other countries of the Bloc; eleven years after the death of Stalin and the bloodily suppressed Berlin uprising; and five years after Christa Wolf's consent to serve as a Stasi collaborator, code name "Margarete," who for the next three years met frequently with officers of the secret police in special contact apartments to inform, orally and in written reports, on her and her husband's friends and acquaintances representing the literary and artistic community of East Germany.

The bitter ironies of Wolf's career and fame, considered in light of the discovery of her collaboration, have been pointed out by others, and they are obvious enough (though not always to Wolf herself). One's instinctive reaction to the fury of attacks unleashed against her, moreover, is more compassion than *schadenfreude*; reading some of the polemics around "the Wolf case" in the German press is much like watching the French newsreels of the last days of World War II, with courageous citizens restoring the nation's moral health by shaving the heads of the neighborhood women who slept with the enemy. Still, the issue will not go away, even if we accept Wolf's rather shaky argument that forty-two thick volumes of Stasi files *about* her as a dissident in later years (all right, forty-two volumes look impressive on a shelf, but is it difficult to produce files of such bulk if they include meticulous transcripts of even the most innocent phone conversations?) are an absolving counterbalance to the single "thin fascicle" containing reports *by* her, which were produced for the Stasi between 1959 and 1962.

Some may accept that. Others may also cite such mitigating circumstances as youthful naïveté, though Wolf was 30 in 1959, or the zeal of the sincere believer who would have done any unpleasant thing to individual people to precipitate the People's universal happiness. And there is the question of the wider context of the Wolf affair. A collection of the polemics surrounding the first stage of the controversy was published in Munich in 1991 and titled *"Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf,"* or "The Matter is Not Christa Wolf." The matter, or so the title seems somewhat prophetically to suggest, is—and will continue to be—also the integrity of other prominent GDR intellectuals.

Indeed, from what has since been revealed about, say, Heiner Müller and his career as a Stasi informer, we can be sure that his case stinks (to borrow the popular playwright's beloved olfactory metaphor) much more terribly. More broadly speaking, the issue is the responsibility of the East German intellectuals for what the GDR had become: their almost total failure to oppose the totalitarian system when it was still alive and well, and—what is perhaps more shameful—their almost total failure to make a clean break with their collective past by defining the GDR unequivocally as what it really was, a totalitarian police machine painted pink by a sycophantic culture.

Intellectuals, moreover, are not alone in their culpability. One must also take into account the astounding degree to which all of East German society was corrupted by the omnipresence and the omnipotence of the secret police. Instances of informing on one's own spouse, parent or child doubtless cropped up in other countries of the Eastern Bloc as well, but nowhere except in the GDR was the recruitment of such informers a standard policy. Is the Wolf case, then, really so exceptional? Isn't the media's focus on her tantamount to making her a scapegoat for others' sins? And finally there is the question of ethics, theoretical and practical; Wolf undoubtedly has a point when she insists that what was wrong in her past should be balanced with what was right in it.

Yet in the end the issue of a person's moral responsibility is at stake, and so is the related but not identical issue of a writer's integrity. We may pass this judgment or that judgment on Wolf, but a nagging question remains, and it is safe to say that the question will haunt her as long as she writes. The question is: All ethical ramifications of Wolf's actions aside, what are we to think of anything that she wrote after 1959? What are we to think, for instance, of her two most recently published books, particularly from the standpoint of that thorny criterion that is inseparable from our notion of literature, the criterion of the literary work's "truth"?

Let us put ourselves in Wolf's shoes at the moment of, say, her 1964 speech. As she reads it in the Bitterfeld conference room, she is already no stranger to what a police state can do to its citizens. She has already been through the acts of betrayal and duplicity that the state demanded of her, and that she performed with strong inner reserve perhaps, but still as best as she could. (Some of the reports of her Stasi contacts emphasize her punctuality, her willingness to cooperate, her zeal and her initiative: what the Germans call *vorauseilender Gehorsam*—roughly, overzealous obedience or eagerness to please authority—has been, according to her own admissions today, a steady trait of her personality since her childhood in Nazi Germany.) She is a thinking person, an intellectual, a writer. Whatever her opinion of herself, her experience, her society, her country's political system, she knows more than a work of Socialist Realist art could possibly express. And yet she stands at the lectern and says:

> What are the advantages of art in a socialist society?... For art, the advantages of our society lie in the fact that by nature it is in tune with the objective laws of social development, with the objective interests of human beings.... To spread the truth about it does not hurt it but helps it. For the first time in human history, society no longer presents an unbridgeable contradiction to the humanism of art ...

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That was what she had to say in 1964. What she had to say on the subject of "the advantages of [East German] society" exactly twenty-five years later, in an interview given on October 8, 1989, sounds admittedly a little more bitter. Yet this bitterness by no means signifies a collapse of her faith in the GDR as a product of the "objective laws of social development." On the contrary, it is a reaction to the incomprehensible behavior of some of her fellow citizens, who flee all of a sudden and in great numbers to the West, or demand Germany's unification. "It seems to me," preaches Wolf from the heights of her GDR-generated understanding of the "objective interests of human beings,"

> that it might be in the interests of the Federal Republic, too, if there were a German alternative to the structures which have developed there—and which I'm not trying to criticize. In the area of culture, for instance, it could be important to both the Germanys if certain traditions were preserved. Revolutionary traditions, for example, which have never been taken seriously in the Federal Republic and which are evident in writers and artists who have long been accepted residents of the GDR.... *I believe that foundations and structures exist in the GDR which are worth preserving* [italics mine], and that what we have to do is to reveal the productive possibilities in these structures, and to make them work.

It is a pity that Wolf was apparently in a hurry and that the interview had to end before she could be asked to identify those "certain traditions" as well as those "foundations and structures" that are "worth preserving." What are they? What could she possibly have had in mind? Surely not the Stasi; but just as surely not the Neues Forum. And what would she cite as examples of "revolutionary traditions" in East German literature? Its ubiquitous self-censorship, its subservience to the political authority, its moral cowardice, its sterile conservatism in artistic matters, all of which made it for forty years the laughingstock of European culture?

Ultimately, the difference between Wolf and myself comes down to her view that the fall of the GDR was a historic tragedy and my view that it was one of the very few unquestionably fortunate things that happened to mankind in this century. I can't help it: the sound of the acronym GDR evokes in my mind nothing but images of the machine-gun posts along the Berlin Wall, the S.S.-modeled caps and the barking German shepherds of the border guards searching under carriages of train cars for fugitives, the "military advisers," the terrorist-camp instructors and the industrial spies scattered throughout the world, the deformed bodies of the Olympic athletes, the vinyl-and-cardboard P-70 car, the gray grimness of housing projects, the nauseating kitsch of pop songs and T.V. serials, the mendacious propaganda dripping from anything, from murals and banners to novels and films, the miles and miles of Stasi archives where now a citizen is free to find out who was squealing on him during all these years (was it the wife, or one of the kids, or Grandma?) and finally the clenched-fist salutes of today's Rostock skinheads, whose smooth transition from attending a socialist school to firebombing hotels for refugees has at least the merit of confirming uninhibitedly my suspicion that the difference between the brown and the red fascisms comes down to nothing more than two shades of a single color.

Wolf's point of no return, I suppose, came at the moment when she decided—under what circumstances and what pressures, we can only guess—to suppress her genuine experience of totalitarian evil, her individual truth, and to devote her life to "the truth of art [meant as] its statistical truth, its sociological truth, its truth as a tool of political agitation." At the moment, in other words, when she adopted for good the old principle of Socialist Realism: truth has nothing to do with the world as it really is, and everything to do with the world as it should be.

Utopian thinking is the mildest of possible names for this kind of reasoning. In one of the most recent addresses in *The Author's Dimension*, a speech tellingly titled "Momentary Interruption" and delivered on January 31, 1990, Wolf mourns the downfall of the GDR yet again (did she learn no new facts about its "traditions" and its "structures" after October, 1989?) and wonders:

> What will become of East Germany's forty years of history? A history that is not a phantom, after all, although when it is gone, it will leave a phantom pain. Who will continue to express openly the grief, shame and remorse which I read in many people's letters and see in their eyes—once everyone is busy trying to improve our material conditions? Who will still oppose the negative effects of an economic system whose blessings most people understandably desire? There is another possibility, too, although I hardly dare to mention it so soon. We may see a need for utopian thinking slowly grow back ...

Please, Ms. Wolf, spare us this frightening vision. What utopian thinking did to you is scary enough.

STANISLAW BARANCZAK is the author most recently of *Breathing Under Water and Other East European Essays* (Harvard University Press).

Flower Power

BY HELEN VENDLER

The Wild Iris by Louise Glück

(Ecco, 80 pp., $19.95)

Louise Glück is a poet of strong and haunting presence. Her poems, published in a series of memorable books over the last twenty years, have achieved the unusual distinction of being neither "confessional" nor "intellectual" in the usual senses of those words, which are often thought to represent two camps in the life of poetry. For a long time, Glück refused both the autobiographical and the discursive, in favor of a presentation that some called mythical, some mystical.

The voice in the poems is entirely self-possessed, but it is not possessed by self in a journalistic way. It told tales, rather, of an archetypal man and woman in a garden, of Daphne and Apollo, of mysteriously significant animal visitations. Yet behind those stories there hovered a psychology of the author that lingered, half-seen, in the poems. Glück's language revived the possibilities of high assertion, assertion as from the Delphic tripod. The words of the assertions, though, were often humble, plain, usual; it was their hierarchic and unearthly tone that distinguished them. It was not a voice of social prophecy, but of spiritual prophecy—a tone that not many

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women had the courage to claim.

It was something of a shock, therefore, when Glück's recent book *Ararat* turned away from symbol to "real life," which was described with a ruthless flatness as though honesty demanded a rock-bottom truth distilled out of years of reflection. In that book Glück restrained her piercing drama of consciousness, and reined in her gift for poetic elaboration. It was clear that some sort of self-chastisement was underway.

Now, reversing course, she has written a very opulent, symbolic book, full—of all things—of talking flowers. The book is really one long poem, framed as a sequence of liturgical rites: the flowers talk to their gardener-poet; the poet, who is mourning the loss of youth, passion and the erotic life, prays to a nameless god (in Matins and Vespers, many times repeated); and the god, in a very tart voice, addresses the poet. As the flowers are to their gardener-poet, so is she to her gardener-god; the flowers, in their stoic biological collectivity, and their pathos, speak to her, sometimes reproachfully, as she speaks, imploringly, to her god. The god has a viewpoint both lofty and ironic, and repeatedly attacks the self-pity or self-centeredness of the poet. These are dangerous risks for a late twentieth-century poem to take, but Glück wins the wager of her premises. The human reader, too, is placed in "this isthmus of a middle state" (Pope) between the vegetatively animate world and the severe spiritual world, and shares the poet's predicament.

She is here returning to an earlier sequence of hers called "The Garden," which rewrote the myth of Eden. As *The Wild Iris* progresses, we see that Eden has collapsed. The opening mood of the book reflects the absolute pointlessness of living when one can think of nothing to hope for. Despair prompts the liturgical addresses to the god (seven Matins by day in the first half of the sequence, ten Vespers by night in the second half). Most of the other titles in the sequence are names of flowers, beginning with the wild iris and ending with the silver lily, the gold lily and the white lilies.

Glück links herself in these flower-poems to her two chief predecessors in using flowers as images of the soul, George Herbert and Emily Dickinson. In spiritual deprivation, the soul is like a bulb hidden underground. In spring, it finds its season of flowering and renewal. Here is Herbert:

> Who would have thought my shriveled
> heart
> Could have recovered greenness? It was
> gone
> Quite underground, as flowers depart
> To see their mother root, when they have
> blown;
> Where they together,
> All the hard weather,
> Dead to the world, keep house
> unknown....
>
> And now in age I bud again,
> After so many deaths, I live and write;
> I once more smell the dew and rain,
> And relish versing; O my only light,
> It cannot be
> That I am he
> On whom thy tempests fell all night.

And here, to bridge the gap of time between Herbert and Glück, is Dickinson:

> Through the dark Sod – as Education –
> The Lily passes sure –
> Feels her white foot – no trepidation –
> Her faith – no fear –
>
> Afterward – in the Meadow
> Swinging her Beryl Bell –
> The Mold-life – all forgotten – now –
> In Ecstasy – and Dell –

In a more effortful moment, closer to the more despairing Glück poems, Dickinson wrote about the helpless religious pleading of the seed "That wrestles in the Ground, / Believing if it intercede / It shall at length be found."

But the lessons that the soul was taught in the seventeenth century and the nineteenth century have to be rescripted for the late twentieth century. No longer convinced of the preciousness of each individual soul, are we to grieve over our individual losses? In one of Glück's poems, the bed of scilla reproaches the poet for her focus on the erotic self, and urges her to abandon herself to collective biological being, to be one of an undifferentiated bed of human flowers. The collective wisdom of the scilla bed is one way of looking at one's fate: to say of oneself and others, "We go where we are sent by the wind of Fate, take root by water, and hear the mingled musics of life's current and its songs." Here is "Scilla," as the flowers reprove the poet:

> Not I, you idiot, not self, but we, we—waves
> of sky blue like
> a critique of heaven: why
> do you treasure your voice
> when to be one thing
> is to be next to nothing?
> Why do you look up? To hear
> an echo like the voice
> of god? You are all the same to us,
> solitary, standing above us, planning
> your silly lives: you go
> where you are sent, like all things,

Celia Dreaming

Bright sphere, I have watched you dreaming,
your face a wordless whorl, an inward-folding flower,
whose petals spiral round a dream of milk and hunger,
a fear of falling farther than outstretched arms
can catch you, while I stand beyond the circle
of your dreaming joy and fear, amazed that you
have been here half a year. Half a year!

Yesterday in the garden, as you slept on my shoulder,
I watched a bee tunnel into the Rose of Sharon,
summer's late-blooming flower, watched as head,
then furred legs, disappeared completely
into the heart of the flower, back beyond
the body's origin, as if it could be unborn.
Sphere, before you were with me, where were you?

Waking, you reached to touch the white face
of the flower, then another and another, faces
quickly flowing past us, or held and stared into,
as if between two hands, the way a countenance
that lies in rippling water finally comes clear,
making me wonder how of all the million millions,
it is *you*, you who are with me, you and not another.

ELIZABETH SPIRES

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where the wind plants you,
one or another of you forever
looking down and seeing some image
of water, and hearing what? Waves.
and over waves, birds singing.

The poem "Scilla" is arranged on a few strings: one is the necklace of "-ing"'s (thing, nothing, standing, planning, things, looking, seeing, hearing, singing)—nine of them in seventeen short lines. The four successive questions comprise another string, and yet another is linked by water: "waves of sky blue," "some image of water," "waves," "waves." Even the word "echo" brings up the myth of Narcissus bending over water; we "look up" to hear the echo, and "look ... down" to see an image. The sharp reproof of "Scilla" asks whether it should not be enough for us to see waves and hear birdsong. What, after all, do we need the post-reproductive erotic life for? And why should we lament its absence so bitterly?

Just when we might begin to believe in the scilla-solution and try to live like plants, Glück's god enters with *his* correction of the scilla's point of view:

Whatever you hoped,
you will not find yourselves in the garden,
among the growing plants.
Your lives are not circular like theirs:

your lives are the bird's flight
which begins and ends in stillness—
which *begins* and *ends*, in form echoing
this arc from the white birch
to the apple tree.

And would the poet want, in any case, to relive the erotic life? Glück answers with a picture of the archetypal young couple in the Garden:

I couldn't do it again,
I can hardly bear to look at it—

in the garden, in light rain
the young couple planting
a row of peas, as though
no one has ever done this before,
the great difficulties have never as yet
been faced and solved.

By the next poem, the garden is being called "the poisonous field," and the couple, fallen into mutual recrimination, are sharply chidden by the god, who reminds them that they suffer equally and should rise in spiritual stature through grief. As the man and the woman sink in self-pity, each saying, "*No one's despair is like my despair*," the god retorts,

Do you suppose I care
if you speak to one another?
But I mean you to know
I expected better of two creatures
who were given minds: if not
that you would actually care for each other
at least that you would understand
grief is distributed
between you, among all your kind, for me
to know you, as deep blue
marks the wild scilla, white
the wood violet.

Glück's god is here voicing the Keatsian belief that individual grief creates personal identity, the "colors" of character. The ravishing musicality of Glück's ending emphasizes the surprisingly consonant nature of various identities: the *violet* is *white*, the scilla is *wild*, and *wild* and *white* and *violet* in the *woods* make for a phonetic beauty that stands for natural and moral beauty.

I have gone through this much of Glück's narrative simply to show its didactic and dialectical nature, its dimensions, its mythical means. The sequence is constantly surprising as it moves along, since we have no idea who will speak next, in what tone, with what spiritual argument. There is an exquisite defense, for instance, in "Love in Moonlight," of all that the erotic life has meant, could mean, did mean. Outside, we see a summer evening, "a whole world thrown away on the moon":

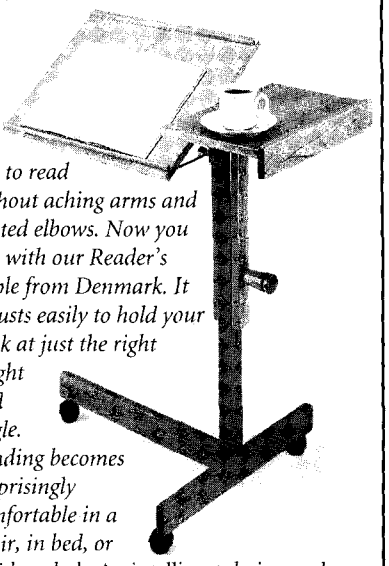
and in the dark, the gold dome of
the capitol
converted to an alloy of moonlight, shape
without detail, the myth, the archetype, the
soul
filled with fire that is moonlight really,
taken
from another source, and briefly
shining as the moon shines: stone or not,
the moon is still that much of a living
thing.

Surely this fifteen-line "sonnet" in elegiac memory of the borrowed light of passionate love will hold its own against the strictures of scilla or the scilla's god.

And how does the story end? It has several endings. One is the poet's; she blossoms in spite of herself (the last Vespers). Three are the god's: the tender "Sunset," the stern "Lullaby" and the pitiless "September Twilight," as the god erases his work. Two are poems spoken by a single flower: "The Silver Lily" reassures the poet about the end, while "The Gold Lily" is full of terror and abandonment. Finally "The White Lilies" offers a colloquy between two lovers, as one calms the fear of the other with the old paradox that temporal burial is the avenue to imaginative eternity:

Hush, beloved. It doesn't matter to me
how many summers I live to return:
this one summer we have entered eternity.
I felt your two hands

Lay Down Your Arms



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bury me to release its splendor.

These old reciprocals—burial and permanence, mortality and eternity—are lyric standbys. But Glück's white lily, unlike Dickinson's and Herbert's flowers, will not rise from its "mold-life" except on the page.

What a strange book *The Wild Iris* is, appearing in this fin-de-siècle, written in the language of flowers. It is a *lieder* cycle, with all the mournful cadences of that form. It wagers everything on the poetic energy remaining in the old troubadour image of the spring, the Biblical lilies of the field, natural resurrection. It depends, too, on old religious notions of spiritual discipline. It is pre-Raphaelite, theatrical, staged and posed. It is even affected. But then, poetry has a right to these postures. When someone asked Wallace Stevens's wife whether she liked his poems, she answered, "I like Mr. Stevens's poems when they are not affected. But they are so often affected." And so they were. The trouble lay, rather, in Elsie Stevens's mistrust of affectation. It is one of the indispensable gestures in the poet's repertory.

HELEN VENDLER is Porter University Professor at Harvard University. She is completing a commentary on Shakespeare's sonnets.

Founders, Keepers

BY CASS R. SUNSTEIN

To Make A Nation: The Rediscovery of American Federalism by Samuel H. Beer

(Harvard University Press, 474 pp., $29.95)

Imagine that a decade from now, an extraordinary new constitution emerges to govern the democratic state of Russia. Imagine that this constitution is adopted after a long period of discussion and debate among the Russian people, that it combats internal conflicts and external threats, and that it seems to ensure against the problems of both Communist and post-Communist Russia. Such a document would not have the sanctity attached to older documents; but precisely because people would know exactly what its provisions were for, it would have major compensating virtues. The Russians might not revere their constitution, but it would speak directly to them.

Americans revere their Constitution, but it is not clear that it speaks directly to us. To be sure, we are aware of the basic structures of federalism, of checks and balances, of the Bill of Rights, of the power of the Supreme Court. But we no longer have much of a sense of the concrete struggles and dilemmas that gave the Constitution its dimensions and its shape. We are entirely unlike the citizens described by Thomas Paine, who carried the Constitution in their pockets and frequently consulted it for guidance on the issues of the day. Sometimes the Constitution seems too abstract, too old, too distant, even a bit too sterile. Its authors do not seem like real people addressing concrete problems.

Samuel H. Beer's new book is a self-conscious effort to produce a "usable past"—an understanding of the Constitution, and of its original context, that can speak vividly and with some specificity to current readers. Beer—an expert in British politics—describes the American Constitution-makers as great nationalizers and democrats, committed to strong government operating securely under popular control. Beer thinks that we can draw something of a straight line connecting Madison and Hamilton to Abraham Lincoln to Franklin Delano Roosevelt to Lyndon Johnson—and that there is a similar line to be drawn from the anti-federalist opponents of the Constitution to John C. Calhoun to Ronald Reagan.

For Beer, the great drama of American constitutional thought, still very much with us today, involves a concrete struggle between two sets of ideas. On the one side are the heirs of Montesquieu, believing that a republic can flourish only if it is small and homogenous. On this view, heterogeneity and difference pose great risks to stability and social peace. A large nation must be a kind of confederacy, allowing a large degree of autonomy for self-governing subunits. On the other side are the heirs of James Madison, Montesquieu's great critic, arguing that heterogeneity is an affirmative good, that it promotes social deliberation, and that a large unified republic, not a confederacy, is best able to combat the risks of factionalism, or what we would now call interest-group pressures.

Though Beer discusses a number of antecedents (including Milton and James Harrington), the heart of the book is his vigorous account of the American founders. The account is organized around four closely related ideas: sovereignty, government by discussion, positive constitutionalism and the compound republic. Beer suggests that the American understanding of sovereignty was the building block for all that followed. In England, sovereignty lay with the Parliament, which therefore had (in Blackstone's words) "absolute despotic power." In America, as Madison wrote, "the case was altogether different." Sovereignty was always understood to lie with the people, who constituted and authorized their government, that of nation and states alike.

This shift in the conception of sovereignty had dramatic consequences. It would ultimately entail a vigorous free speech principle, forbidding government from making "seditious libel" a crime. If sovereignty resided with the people, no such crime could exist: the people could not libel themselves. The shift in the conception of sovereignty would also suggest that the old English notion of "mixed government"—allowing representation for various social classes—must be replaced by a system of checks and balances. In this system, the sovereign people, not embodying different social classes, could pursue a strategy of divide and rule by splitting government power among diverse institutions all subject to the people's control.

"Government by discussion" is Beer's term for a system in which deliberation among the diverse and the heterogeneous would encourage the emergence of general truths. The Thomistic commitment to "rule by the wise and the holy," emphasizing authority and deference, left little room for public discussion. For his part, Montesquieu had stressed the need for homogeneity and agreement as a check on social tumult. For Montesquieu and his followers (many of them with us today), a diverse and large society could not be a successful republic. The American founders rejected these views. They sought a system in which the widening of the sphere of interests would actually improve rational deliberation and better protect justice, rights and the common good. Since so many interests must be included and consulted, there would be a natural broadening of outlook. Private preferences would be transformed

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and expanded in the process of deliberation and debate, as more and more concerns and interests were heard and understood.

Beer persuasively shows that Madison and Hamilton did not see the political process as an effort to aggregate and to trade off private interests. They did not model politics on economics or bargaining theory. Their belief in public discussion, understood as a means of changing preferences through broadening perspectives, was the key to their aspirations for government. Beer understands much of American government—including separation of powers, bicameralism and federalism—in this light. All of these institutions were efforts to improve the process of government by discussion.

Equipped with this notion, Beer vigorously rejects the idea that the American constitutional project was to disable government. On the contrary, he sees the Framers' project as expansive, enabling and facilitative—as an effort to establish positive constitutionalism suitable for a "strong democracy" with the broad powers sufficient to meet both domestic and foreign challenges. Beer reminds us that a serious problem with the Articles of Confederation was a weak state, unable to engage in the tasks that were necessary for a commercial republic. The Framers wanted to strengthen government, not to paralyze it.

Finally, Beer shows that Americans rejected Montesquieu's recommendation of a confederate republic in favor of a new entity altogether: the "compound republic." Montesquieu thought that a large republic would be subject to self-destructive tumult. The only possible remedy was a kind of confederacy in which each local unit would have significant autonomy. In such a system, differences would be diminished and self-government would be more likely. The appropriate institution was therefore a kind of convention or agreement among separate states, in which secession was an acknowledged right. We might think of the European Community as a modern example.

As Beer shows, Madison turned Montesquieu's teaching on its head. Madison argued that a large republic would be freer from tumult, and that heterogeneity could be turned to a large nation's advantage. In a compound republic, the source of authority was the people, not the states, and the national government would be supreme over the states. And in a large republic, the various factions would counteract each other, and national representatives, operating above the fray, would be more likely to consult the public good. Rights would be more rather than less secure. Moreover, the parochial interests of the states could be overcome to everyone's benefit. This was a great advantage over Montesquieu's confederacy, in which each state, following its own self-interest, would contribute to the collective disadvantage and eventually its own.

The American systems of national representation, separation of powers and federalism would furnish "auxiliary precautions." National representation would enable better deliberation; the system of separation of powers would be an efficient division of labor and also improve general discussion. Madison made two arguments for maintaining a significant role for the states. The first was efficiency. Because people had different desires and tastes, it was important to allow the states basic governing authority, for they could best respond to local interests. But Madison also urged that states exert a check on the federal government, allowing a vertical as well as horizontal system of checks and balances. In this way, the existence of states could help counteract the spirit of faction. But under the founders' system, there was no question that in the end the national government, backed by the sovereignty of the people, would be supreme. Federalism was hardly a means of limiting the system of self-rule. It was part and parcel of the democratic faith of the early Americans.

This, then, is Beer's picture of the founders—as surprisingly coherent theorists, nationalists, centralizers and democrats, supporters of strong government, committed to broad public deliberation. This is a distinctive and important account. For one thing, it helps show the sterility of the debate, now popular in both history and law, about whether the founders were "republicans" or "liberals." In this debate, republicans are said to be concerned with the common good and with encouraging broad public deliberation among virtuous people; liberals are said to emphasize the protection of private rights and the role of self-interest in politics. Beer shows that this division is far too crude to capture the founding vision. To be sure, the founders were republicans. They prized public deliberation and operated with a belief in the need for and the possibility of a virtuous citizenry. But they were liberals too. They recognized that people are entitled to disagree, and they favored a set of rights to be protected. Of course they believed in limited government. On Beer's account, the question whether the Framers were "liberals" or "republicans" never emerges.

Equally important is Beer's emphasis throughout on the aspiration to "government by discussion," and on the connection between that aspiration and the American rejection of natural hierarchies. Here Beer counters the persistent but ahistorical tendency to see the founders as anti-democratic aristocrats seeking to protect existing distributions of wealth from popular change. Some critics think that in their rejection of anti-federalist thought—some of which did place a high premium on economic equality—the founders were seeking to limit dangerous redistributive strategies. It is not as if there is no truth in this. The Framers were certainly interested in creating economic prosperity and in giving birth to a truly commercial republic, and they believed that certain redistributive legislation (prominently including debtor relief laws) could prove an obstacle to that goal.

But Beer shows that the Framers cannot fairly be characterized as aristocratic enemies of popular rule. They insisted that sovereignty lay with the people, not with their representatives, and much of their thought was associated with this rejection of their monarchical heritage. Where they distrusted pure democracy, it was not because they sought to entrench class privilege or existing distributions of wealth, but because they wanted to ensure institutions that would benefit from the best kind of public deliberation, and to offer constraints against its absence. They wanted to make popular rule possible and enduring, and following Harrington, they knew that complex rather than simple institutions were necessary for that task.

Beer also offers an important corrective to the view that the American founders were hostile to government. On the contrary, their Constitution was designed to enable public action. Thus the great sources of national power—commerce, taxation, spending for the general welfare—were intended to confer the kind of government authority necessary for a commercial republic. This was hardly the project of people who sought to stifle the activities of the new government.

As I have noted, Beer is interested in providing a vivid and usable past, and in many ways he has succeeded. In some ways, however, that overriding goal seems to me to get in the way of a full picture of what the founders were about. Take, for example, Beer's claims about the continuity from Madison and Hamilton through Lincoln to Roosevelt and Johnson. Undoubtedly the great American nationalists had this much in common: they opposed people who sought to diminish national power.

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You deserve a factual look at...

Myths about Israel and the Middle East (2)

Should we re-examine endlessly repeated platitudes?

In a previous installment in this series of clarifying messages about Israel and the Middle East, we examined certain myths which, by dint of constant repetition, had acquired currency and acceptance. We looked at the myth of "Palestinian nationhood", the myth of the Gaza Strip and Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") being "occupied territory", the myth that Jewish settlements in these territories are "the greatest obstacle to peace", and the myth that Israel is unwilling to "yield land for peace". And we cleared up the greatest myth of all, namely that Israel's administration of the territories and not Arab determination to destroy the state, is the root cause of the conflict between the Arabs and Israel. But these are not all the myths; there are more.

What are some of these myths?

Myth: The Arabs of Israel are a persecuted minority without civil and political rights. **Reality:** The 700,000 non-Jews (mostly Arabs) who are citizens of Israel have the same civil rights that Jews have. They vote, are members of the Knesset (parliament), and are part of Israel's civil and diplomatic services. Arabs have full access to the Israeli legal, health and educational systems, including Arabic and Moslem universities. The only difference between the "rights" of Arabs and Jews is that the Jews must serve three years in the military and at least one month a year until age 50. The Arabs have no such obligation. For them, military service is voluntary, but very few avail themselves of the privilege. **Myth:** Israel should give up Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") because strategic depth is meaningless in this age of missiles. **Reality:** Israel is a mini-state—about half the size of San Bernardino county in California. If another, even smaller mini-state were carved out of it, Israel would be totally indefensible. That is the opinion of 100 retired U.S. generals and admirals as conveyed to the President of the U.S. If the Arabs were to occupy whatever little strategic depths Israel has between the Jordan River and its populated coast, they would not need any missiles. Artillery and mortars would suffice, since Israel would be only nine miles wide at its waist. Those who urge such a course either do not understand the situation or have a death wish for Israel. **Myth:** If Israel would allow a Palestinian state to arise in Judea/Samaria and in the Gaza Strip it would be a democratic state and would be totally demilitarized. **Reality:** There is no prospect at all that anything resembling a democratic state could be created. There is not a single democratic Arab state—all of them are tyrannies of varying degrees. Even today, under Israeli administration, the PLO, the Islamic fundamentalists, and other factions fight for supremacy and ruthlessly murder each other. A country torn apart by civil strife like Lebanon is likely to be a much better prospect. As for demilitarization, it is totally unlikely that—with Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, all of which are in a declared state of war with Israel at its borders—a power vacuum would be possible. Despite pious promises, the arms merchants of the world would find a great new market; and the neighboring hostile Arab countries would be happy to supply anything else that might be needed. **Myth:** Israel should make "confidence building" gestures for the sake of peace. **Reality:** What really is it that the world expects Israel to do for the sake of peace? Twenty-one of the twenty-two Arab countries consider themselves in a state of war with Israel and don't even recognize its "existence". That has been going on for forty-five years. Wouldn't it be about time that the Arabs made some kind of a "gesture"? Could they not for instance terminate the state of war? Could they not finally abolish the economic boycott against Israel that has been in place for over forty years—long before Israel came into the administration of the "West Bank"? Could they not stop the yearly charade of attempting the expulsion of Israel from the United Nations? Any single one of these would be such a "gesture", but none is forthcoming.

Now that the parties to the conflict in the Middle East are engaged, for over a year, in an on-again/off-again peace conference, the old clichés are being trotted out again and the old myths resurrected in order to pressure Israel to make "concessions". Israel is America's staunchest ally and certainly its only true ally in that area of the world. It is in our national interest that stark reality, not myths, govern any peace negotiations.

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But we could also tell a convincing story of discontinuity. Lincoln and Roosevelt were hardly Madison. The Civil War and its aftermath are often said, and plausibly, to have created a second constitutional regime, with a new system of rights, a new system of federalism and a new relationship among the three branches of the national government. It is at least reasonable to think that through its vigorous expansion of national and especially presidential power, the New Deal changed the post-Civil War Constitution as much as the Civil War changed the founders' own document. Ronald Reagan's project was not the anti-federalists' own. His efforts to diminish national authority were quite modest, and in their way not discontinuous with the founding vision.

Now Beer's principal project is to describe the founding itself, not to tell a tale about all of American history; but I think that the problems with his claim of continuity do bear on his main goal. Part of the trouble is that the description of the founding seems in places coarse-grained, with vague abstractions (strong democracy, justice, the common good, rights) doing more work than they should. The Framers believed, for example, in justice and the common good, but Beer never makes it entirely clear how they understood these ideas. We know of course that the founders sought to protect rights; but which rights? Did they mean by rights what we mean by rights? Surely not; the category of protected rights has shifted dramatically in the last two hundred years. Of considerable importance to the Framers' project was the contracts clause, requiring states to respect the sanctity of contracts. As noted, debtor relief legislation was perceived as a major problem under the Articles of Confederation, and it marked some of what the Framers saw as an invasion of rights in that period. But Beer gives no attention to this important issue. Beer emphasizes political rights, and rightly so. But the Constitution did not protect the right to vote, and the original understanding of freedom of speech was exceedingly narrow. Individual rights as we now understand them were really inaugurated by the Civil War Amendments.

Slavery itself was a serious question, of course, in the founding period, and the Constitution's near silence on this issue was a product of some disputed mixture of considerations of principle and prudence. Many people thought that rights were involved on both sides. Here too Beer is silent, and the absence of discussion of this important issue—a key to all stages of American constitutionalism—

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impairs his account. In short, Beer's effort to celebrate the founders' achievement sometimes seems to prevent him from offering a sufficiently finely detailed picture of what they were about.

More generally, I think that Beer makes the Madison/Hamilton position seem both more coherent and more Rooseveltian than in fact it was. In many ways this is New Dealers' history, with a large emphasis on what Bruce Ackerman calls "the myth of rediscovery"—the insistence that the twentieth-century American state is merely recalling the work of Madison and Hamilton. It is true that the Constitution provided for more centralization than the Articles of Confederation. Beer's basic claim—that the Framers were strong democratic nationalists, committed to enabling government and to popular sovereignty—is powerfully sustained.

But it is also true that for many in the framing period, the systems of federalism, judicial review and checks and balances were designed to constrain government action in the interest of a certain understanding of liberty. For the Framers, democracy was a bad word; they sought to create a republic, one of whose goals was to constrain popular impulses, partly in the interest of protecting property rights. The Constitution was designed to be not just enabling, but disabling as well. Sharp constraints on government power were part of its point. If Hamilton and Madison were centralizers committed to positive government, it was in a pretty modest sense, certainly by modern standards. Beer's portrait produces, I think, more simplicity and coherence than we actually find.

And what of the relationship between the national government and the states? It is true that the authority of the national government grew dramatically with the founding, but of course the founders did not envisage a nation with the extraordinary powers of the late twentieth-century federal government. Instead they thought that constitutionally enumerated sources of national power allowed for the creation of specific authorities suited to specific tasks. If we are to have a full picture of the founding vision, we need to know what these sources of authority entailed. Here Beer's treatment seems to me too general and abstract.

I have noted that Beer believes the great struggle in American history is between the nationalists and the believers in state autonomy; he shows this struggle in the earliest debates over the Constitution. But in these debates, a good deal has always turned on the question of what centralization is for. Madison and Hamilton thought that a prosperous economy required a nation with (among other things) a strong executive branch, taxing power and authority over interstate commerce. Lincoln's legacy is not only the preservation of the union but also and simultaneously the attack on the system of racial caste. Roosevelt sought to experiment with methods for counteracting some of the hardships in a system of economic laissez-faire.

For a fuller picture of the great issues of American constitutionalism, we need to understand how the institutional debates were intertwined with a set of concrete substantive controversies. Whatever else Hamilton and Madison were, they were great experimenters and improvisers, seeing institutional arrangements as important not in themselves, but as means for accomplishing a variety of particular ends. In this they were joined by Lincoln, and above all by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, with his willingness to stretch the constitutional framework with new institutional arrangements.

There is also a degree of vagueness in Beer's interesting description of the system of government by discussion. The subject is especially important, since it bears on such modern problems as campaign finance regulation, federalism, access to the media, the nature of the commitment to free expression, even (as Beer emphasizes) multiculturalism. One basic question is this: When and by what mechanisms does free discussion encourage the emergence of more general truths? When people disagree on first principles—when there is real heterogeneity—government by discussion seems most difficult. If people have nothing in common, they may have trouble even understanding each other. Here the heirs of Montesquieu are on their strongest ground. There clearly is a large task for liberal institutions, which attempt to ensure a common life for people who disagree sharply with one another. It seems especially healthy to create institutional arrangements that allow for high degrees of both representation and decentralization. On these issues, the Framers have hardly had the last word.

As Beer is aware, current dilemmas cannot be solved by any description of the making of an old document, even the Constitution. But certainly this much can be said: through his emphasis on the democratic and nationalizing tendencies of the framing period, Beer has offered an admirable discussion of America's founding aspirations, and he succeeds in revealing the close relationship between those aspirations and some complex, seemingly erratic constitutional structures. More than two hundred years ago, reasonable people could think that the goal of government by discussion, and the preservation of liberty, would be promoted rather than undermined by an unruly system containing checks and balances, federalism, judicial review and a specified set of individual rights. Among other things, Beer's book is a reminder of the need to connect lofty substantive goals with shrewd institutional arrangements. As we think about our own aspirations, this is a singularly important lesson to keep in mind.

CASS R. SUNSTEIN is the author most recently of *The Partial Constitution* (Harvard University Press).

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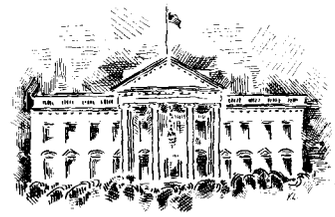
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Name calling

"MR. PRESIDENT, I CANNOT SAY Dear Mr. President, because I hate you...." Thus begins a letter to the White House from a Serbian nationalist émigré in Oregon, who has also tried to strike up a rather friendlier correspondence with our household. He had fired off his letter to the president (a copy of which he enclosed for us—"one of my grievances to share with you") in response to Clinton's tough anti-Serb talk during the campaign. As the United States now inches toward action, he's doubtless getting more irate, and that's saying something. "God will not let you exchange Serbian blood for Islam-Nazi support," he was already warning several months ago. "[Archduke] Ferdinand [tried], remember? You know the rest of the story." If he knew the truth about the man in our house, he would be apoplectic: no "dear" for us. This zealot mistook my husband, whose last name can be either Serbian or Croatian, for one of his own. It's a mistake that only a couple of years ago wouldn't have made much difference at all: my in-laws don't come from Boka Kotorska as he'd guessed, but from the island of Korcula, just up the Adriatic coast, two areas that until lately differed on little more than the question of who had the best beaches. In the hurry to invoke the enmity of the deep past to explain Yugoslavia's collapse, it's just this intimacy of the recent past that risks being forgotten, as Michael Ignatieff notes in *The New York Review of Books*. Among the many bewildering causes and consequences of the Balkan disaster is the sudden transformation of recently insignificant differences into insuperable Difference. A mistake over a name common to two groups can convert the urge to confide ("I wish I could talk to you," our correspondent writes: he'll accept a collect call) into the urge to attack. The desire to reach out and touch someone has never sounded less innocent.

EVERYBODY WHO GETS NEAR THE siege of Srebrenica gags on the appellation "safe area" to describe a place in which Muslims have been left totally unsafe, "protected" from several thousand Serbian fighters by 146 Canadian troops. A U.N. official who inspected the region used more accurate terminology: he called it an "open jail." But it's the Serbs who have been most gruesomely honest. Russian officials visiting the area (who have no motive for smearing their "Serbian brothers") told reporters they had overheard a radio message from the Bosnian Serb military commander Ratko Mladic in which he announced that "the cattle had now been driven into the corral, and the time had come to fire into live meat." As the Russians delicately put it, "a very bad impression was made."

A REAL CIVIL WAR MAKES OUR OWN incivilities seem a lot less shocking. Still, I was taken aback to read recently in *The Washington Post* that high school students in Washington's affluent suburbs regularly curse their teachers out. Expletives are of course standard conversational fare among kids—among everybody: "the B word is strongly used, and the F word," as a senior in one school primly put it. But when reprimanded, students now apparently call their teachers "bitch" to their faces, and get more creative when the authority figure is male: "I called him a lot of stuff," a freshman told the *Post* reporter, claiming he kept up the abuse "for a minute straight." Enforcing discipline, according to the kids, is the same as showing students disrespect, and they have no choice but to defend their honor. "I told [the teacher] the last person who yelled at me got slapped," a junior explained. What about teachers defending their own honor? Another student said that resorting to corporal punishment would spell trouble, and he wasn't talking about lawsuits. He had a much less time-consuming comeuppance in mind: "If a teacher around here tried to paddle a student, there would be a lot of teachers in the emergency room."



SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS, PRINCIpals, parents and teachers all diagnosed the youthful barbarism as one more sign of our decadent times: the result of too much T.V., too little parental attention, the corruption of Hollywood, the corrosive power of consumer culture, a new generation gap, the laxness of school rules. I would have been sold on the decline and fall theory, except that I was in the middle of reading aloud before bedtime from *Farmer Boy*, one of the many books in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* series: The behavior crisis in our classrooms is nothing compared with the scene in the 1860s. Washington back-talkers look tame next to the insolent teenagers in Wilder's one-room schoolhouse. They wreak annual havoc, hounding one poor schoolmaster after another out of the school. First they taunt him into attempting to discipline them, then they laugh in his face, jeer at him and thrash him. And there is no emergency room: the most recent teacher "was hurt so bad he died of it later." Enter Mr. Corse, the latest target. Never mind a paddle, he comes armed with a blacksnake ox whip fifteen feet long, with which he lashes the student ringleader again and again, tearing his clothes and his flesh. You might wonder how modern youngsters would take to this flagrant demonstration of disrespect by a teacher to his students. The response of my small, admittedly unscientific sample: wild cheers for Mr. Corse.

MR. CORSE HAS A FITTING NAME, given his harsh revenge, and Wilder probably didn't make it up. Sometimes life does almost as felicitous a job as Dickens or Thackeray in christening people and places. Larry Speakes, Judge Sofaer, Cardinal Sin: the list is almost enough to convince you that the guys were born to their callings. The harmony seems a throwback to the days when Mr. Taylor, Mr. Carpenter, Mr. Franklin and Mr. Smith had no need of business cards. It's quaint to read in *The New York Times* that Mr. Trotman and Mr. Rollwagen recently met to confer about designs for a pollution-free car. And that E. Z. Million discussed the endowment of a university professorship. Some people, of course, have the opposite luck, and the disharmony of their names hints at how much they had to overcome. Mrs. Clinkscales, bless her, managed to become Duke Ellington's piano teacher. The contractor for the Holocaust Museum won the bid despite a grim disqualification: his name was Mr. Gasman. But sometimes, alas, ill-starred names do seem to have prophetic power. Wasn't predatory male lunging inevitable at a convention called Tailhook? Or craziness in a place named Waco? Or endless dithering about the Yugoslav crisis when E.C. foreign ministers met in a Danish town called Middelfart? In recent debates among our own officials about intervening in Bosnia, the parts were too perfectly scripted: pessimism about air strikes from Admiral Jeremiah, American optimism from General McPeak. I'll know our threats are being taken seriously when the Serbs reinstate their former prime minister, Mr. Panic.

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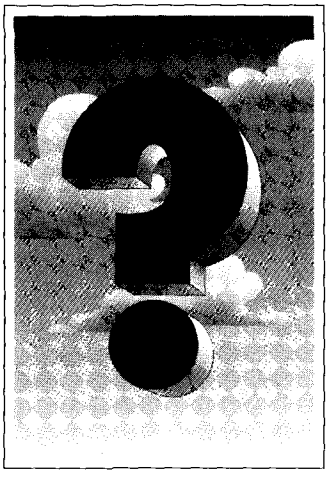

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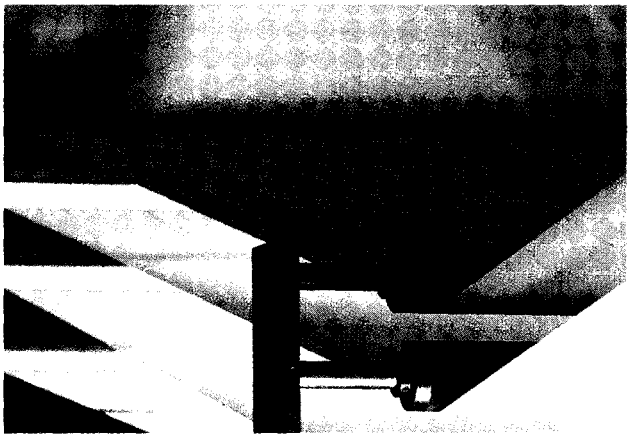

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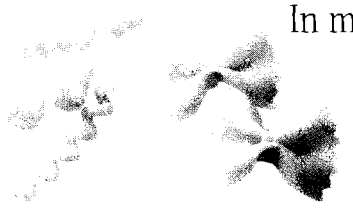

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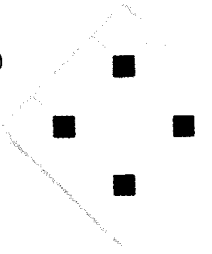

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